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Abbreviations

1LCF – *A Confession of Faith of Seven Congregations or Churches of Christ in London, Which are Commonly (But Unjustly) Called Anabaptists*. London: 1644.

2LCF – *A Confession of Faith Put Forth by the Elders and Brethren of Many Congregations of Christians (Baptized Upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country*. London: 1677.

ODNB – *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online edn. Oxford University Press.

SD – *A declaration of the faith and order owned and practiced in the congregational churches in England agreed upon and consented unto by their elders and messengers in their meeting at the Savoy, October 12, 1658*. London: J.P., 1659.

WCF – *The humble Advice of the Assembly of Divines, Now by Authority of Parliament sitting at Westminster, Concerning a Confession of Faith, with the Quotations and Texts of Scripture annexed. Presented by them lately to both Houses of Parliament*. London: Company of Stationers, 1647.

The majority of the primary sources used in this dissertation come from the Early English Books Online database. Original spelling, capitalization, and emphases have been preserved in titles and quotations unless noted otherwise.

Introduction

This is a study in Historical Theology, describing the federal theology of the English Particular Baptists within the years 1642-1704. In the early part of the seventeenth century doubt concerning the practice of paedobaptism arose among a group of English Separatists. A number of those who initially questioned paedobaptism eventually rejected it and came to be known as Particular Baptists.[1] From the beginning of their formation and throughout their continued existence the Particular Baptists justified their dissent on the point of baptism and the nature of the church by an appeal to covenant theology in published books, pamphlets, and confessions of faith.[2]

Like their confessions of faith, the Particular Baptists' federal theology was not a wholesale rejection of that of the paedobaptists,[3] but rather a conscientious modification and realignment. In their minds, this produced a federal theology that was biblically faithfully and logically consistent.

A. Status Quaestionis

Scholarship of Reformed covenant theology has seen a shift in recent decades, leaving behind the shadow of "two traditions" theories that had previously enjoyed popularity and acceptance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[4] These theories reduced a given theologian's thought to a central dogma and interpreted their covenant theology

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[1] "It may be proper to observe here, that there have been two parties of the English Baptists in England ever since the beginning of the reformation; those that have followed the Calvinistical scheme of doctrines, and from the principal point therein, personal election, have been termed Particular Baptists: And those that have professed the Arminian or remonstrant tenets; and have also from the chief of those doctrines, universal redemption, been called General Baptists." Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, (London: Printed for, and Sold by, the Editor, 1738), I:173.

[2] In this work, the terms "federal theology" and "covenant theology" are equivalent. Some have distinguished covenant theology as a theological system in which the covenants play an important role as opposed to federal theology, a subset of covenant theology in which individual figures are understood to stand for a group of people in covenant. For more on this, see chapter seven.

[3] By "paedobaptists" I am referring to those who baptized infants, i.e., the Church of England, Presbyterians, and Independents.

[4] This analysis of the "two traditions" thesis and its critics relies heavily on the summaries of recent dissertations, namely, Won Taek Lim, "The Covenant Theology of Francis Roberts," (PhD Dissertation, Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Theological Seminary, 2000), 3-28; Brandon C. Jones, "Baptist Sacramental Theology: A Covenantal Framework for Believer Baptism," (PhD Dissertation, Calvin Theological Seminary, 2010), 128-140. The same material is presented in Brandon C. Jones, *Waters of Promise: Finding Meaning in Believer Baptism* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 73-81.

accordingly.[5] Typically, a Genevan and Rhenish tradition were identified, represented by Calvin on the first part and Zwingli and Bullinger on the other. Calvin's tradition was characterized by predestination and unconditionality, emphasizing God's initiative in the covenant. Zwingli and Bullinger's covenant theology was characterized by mutuality and the response of the recipient of the covenant. Later theologians were assigned to one of the two traditions based on their supposed connection to the one or the other's central dogmas.

Richard Muller, Lyle Bierma, and Peter Lillback, among others, reexamined the sources and criticized the methodology of the previous scholarship.[6] They argued that Reformed theology in general, as well as covenant theology in particular, was not built on central dogmas nor should it be analyzed as such. Rather, a single Reformed theology developed diversely in a broad community of orthodoxy defined by confessions of faith. Andrew Woolsey's work is the most important and comprehensive in drawing the lines of "unity and continuity" in Reformed covenant theology from its inception to its later and more developed models.[7]

The result is a clearing and resetting of the field for fresh scholarship directed at individual theologians and groups of theologians that can be studied and described in relation to their own influences. This paves the way for the relatively untouched question of the identity of the Particular Baptists' covenant theology and its relation to the Reformed tradition.

Brandon Jones has cut a path in this direction, completing a dissertation on seventeenth-century Baptist federalism.[8] He located the Baptists' covenantal tradition within the existing diversity of Reformed covenant theology by using Thomas Grantham

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[5] Scholarship on this stream of thought typically identifies the following works as its major representatives: Heinrich Heppe, *Dogmatik des deutschen Protestantismus im sechzehnten Jahrhundert* (Gotha: Perthes, 1857); Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (1939; repr., Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 395-97; and *Errand into the Wilderness* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), 54; Leonard J. Trinterud, "The Origins of Puritanism," *Church History* 20 (1951): 37-57; Jens Møller, "The Beginnings of Puritan Covenant Theology," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 14 (1963): 46-67; Richard L. Greaves, "The Origins and Early Development of English Covenant Thought," *The Historian* 31 (1968): 21-35.

[6] See especially Lyle Bierma, "Federal Theology in the Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 45 (1983): 304-21; Richard Muller, "The Covenant of Works and the Stability of Divine Law in Seventeenth-century Reformed Orthodoxy: A Study in the Theology of Herman Witsius and Wilhelmus À Brakel," *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 (1994): 75-100; Peter Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).

[7] Andrew Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity in Covenantal Thought: A Study in the Reformed Tradition to the Westminster Assembly* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012). Woolsey surveys and critiques the nineteenth-century and twentieth-century historiography of covenant theology at length.

[8] Jones, "Baptist Sacramental Theology."

and Nehemiah Coxe as exemplars of the General and Particular Baptists' basic covenantal positions. Jones pointed the reader to other sources such as John Bunyan, John Tombes, Benjamin Keach, Philip Cary, Edward Hutchinson, Thomas Patient, and John Spilsbury. Jones' scope is very broad, and he does not intend to represent the development or diversity of the Particular Baptists' covenant theology.

Pascal Denault composed a master's thesis on Particular Baptist covenant theology and edited it for publication.[9] Denault arranged his work theologically, not focusing on the historical development, progression, or diversity of the Particular Baptists' covenant theology. Paul Fiddes wrote on the relation of Baptist covenant theology to church covenants in which he provides a brief portrait of the Particular Baptists' view of the covenant of grace as the one covenant of salvation. He rightly makes the point that Baptist views of covenant have consistently impacted their views of the local church and cooperation with other churches. But his work does not aim to present a comprehensive treatment of seventeenth-century Particular Baptist covenant theology.[10] Rather he contends for the ongoing usefulness of covenants as personal relationships for modern Baptist cooperation.[11]

Among works that address the covenant theology of a given Particular Baptist, most limit their focus too narrowly to place the subject of study within the larger context of the Baptist tradition.[12] Other authors have offered incomplete or undocumented historical

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[9] Pascal Denault, *The Distinctiveness of Baptist Covenant Theology* (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground, 2012).

[10] See Paul S. Fiddes, "'Walking Together': The Place of Covenant Theology in Baptist Life Yesterday and Today" in *Pilgrim Pathways: Essays in Baptist History in Honour of B.R. White* (eds., William H. Brackney, Paul S. Fiddes, and John H.Y. Briggs; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1999), 47-74. On the debates between the Particular Baptists and the Paedobaptists of the seventeenth century, especially Philip Cary and John Flavel, see Joel R. Beeke & Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 725-741. On Flavel and Cary, see chapter seven.

[11] Michael J. Walker published an article on the place of infants in Baptist thought in which he laid out some of the basics of Particular and General Baptist covenantal thinking. Walker's presentation is brief and not designed to offer a comprehensive presentation of Baptist covenant theology. Cf. Michael J. Walker "The Relation of Infants to Church, Baptism and Gospel in Seventeenth Century Baptist Theology" *Baptist Quarterly* 21.6 (April 1965): 242-262.

[12] This is not necessarily a criticism. On the covenant theology of John Spilsbury, see Matthew C. Bingham, "The Covenantal Theology of John Spilsbery" in *Journal of the Institute of Reformed Baptist Studies* (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2016): 65-96. On the covenant theology of Hercules Collins, see G. Stephen Weaver Jr., *Orthodox, Puritan, Baptist*: *Hercules Collins (1647-1702) and Particular Baptist Identity in Early Modern England* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 159-163. On the covenant theology of Benjamin Keach see D.B. Riker, *A Catholic Reformed Theologian* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009) and Jonathan W. Arnold, *The Reformed Theology of Benjamin Keach (1640-1704)* (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2013). For an analysis of Riker and Arnold's treatment of Keach see chapter seven. Thomas Collier's views are given a passing mention in Brenton Clark Ferry, *Works in the Mosaic Covenant: A Reformed Taxonomy* (M.Th. thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 2009).

assertions about the Particular Baptists' federal thought.[13] Though Denault and Jones constitute the most significant treatments of seventeenth-century Particular Baptist covenant theology, little work has been done to investigate the historical development, progression, and diversity of the Particular Baptists' federal theology and its roots in the Reformed tradition.[14]

This dissertation seeks to fill the gaps of present research in Baptist covenant theology. The survey of the status quaestionis leads up to the research question, what was the federal theology of the Particular Baptists, and how did it compare to and contrast with the prevailing views of paedobaptist writers in the Reformed tradition? In order to answer the research question, this dissertation investigates several sub-questions. What unified and diversified the covenant theology of the Reformed tradition? In what ways did the Reformed tradition relate the covenants of works and grace to the old and new covenants, and how does the diversity of the tradition on this point clarify connections to Particular Baptist covenant theology? To what extent did hermeneutics play a role in the diversity of Reformed covenant theology, especially regarding typology, and what light does this diversity shed on the relation of Particular Baptist covenant theology to the Reformed tradition? What were the historical and theological backgrounds of the Particular Baptists? How did the covenant theology of the Particular Baptists develop throughout the seventeenth century? To what extent was there unity and diversity in the covenant theology of the Particular Baptists themselves?

B. Methodology

To answer the questions raised above, this dissertation conducts a thorough study of primary sources and describes the covenant theology of the Particular Baptists from 1642-1704. Chronologically, 1642 marks the Particular Baptists' first publications asserting a covenantal argument whereas 1704 marks the death of Benjamin Keach by which time almost all leaders of the first and second generations of Particular Baptists had died. These dates and the subjects of this study concenter on the London Particular Baptists

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[13] For example, Mark Jones and Ted Van Raalte linked Particular Baptist federal theology to dispensationalism. Cf. Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 740-741. Concerning the Particular Baptists, they write, "Their position is one step closer to what would later be affirmed in dispensationalist circles." For more on this, see chapter seven. Without any appeal to contemporaneous or pertinent sources, Greg Nichols asserted that in the Second London Baptist Confession the Particular Baptists "decline to confess the covenant of works." See Greg Nichols, *Covenant Theology: A Reformed and Baptistic Perspective on God's Covenants* (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2011), 326-327. For more on this, see chapter four and the conclusion. These examples are indicative of the need for more thoroughgoing research.

[14] Brandon Jones comments, "Most historical accounts of the origins and development of covenant theology during the Post-Reformation period lack the English Baptists' adoption of and contribution to it, making their versions of covenant theology largely unknown today." Jones, "Baptist Sacramental Theology," 129.

associated with the first and second London Baptist Confessions of Faith in 1644 and 1677. A diachronic approach is especially advantageous for investigating a large and nuanced set of data with the purpose of identifying development and diversity within Particular Baptist covenantal thought throughout six decades.

To understand and appreciate the distinctives of the Particular Baptists' covenant theology, the first chapter offers a broad model of the development of Reformed covenant theology in its unity and diversity. This model provides needed context for identifying the Particular Baptists' place within that theological unity and diversity. It also provides a basic understanding of the logic and hermeneutics that the Baptists used or refused.

Chapters two, three, and four describe the covenant theology of the Particular Baptists in their individual and collective writings from the 1640s through the 1670s, comparing their views to one another and to the larger streams of covenantal thought in which they participated. Each chapter notes points of connection and departure with sources and concepts that the Particular Baptists cited approvingly or intentionally rejected.

Chapter five considers developments in the hermeneutics of Reformed covenant theology so as to highlight the distinctives of John Owen's covenant theology. This contextualizes and explains why the Particular Baptists appealed to Owen as their closest covenantal ally. In turn, Owen's covenant theology provides needed context for Nehemiah Coxe's because Coxe intentionally passed over certain aspects of covenant theology on the basis that Owen had already written sufficient treatments of the same.

Chapters six and seven describe the covenant theology of the Particular Baptists in the 1680s and 1690s.

The conclusion summarizes the Particular Baptists' covenant theology and its relation to the unity and diversity of Reformed covenant theology.

C. An Overview of the Particular Baptists' Origins and Identity

Particular Baptist origins must be considered from a broad and narrow perspective. Broadly, their origins lie in the Puritan movement in the universities and parish churches of England. Narrowly, their origins lie in the emergence of John Spilsbury's congregation from the so-called Jacob/Lathrop/Jessey church.

The separation of the Church of England from Rome under Henry VIII released it from external theological moorings. Establishing an internal centralization and standardization of the faith and practice of the English church became an increasingly complicated task. A church detached from Rome was ripe for the influence of continental Reformation theology which reached English shores and affected pulpits and universities.

One of the driving forces of the Protestant Reformation was an intentional rooting of faith and practice in the written word of God. Whatever was deemed unscriptural among the traditions of Rome was reformed and removed from the church. As these principles

were applied to the English church to varying degrees, some priests rejected ceremonies and doctrines of the English church as being contrary to the teaching of the Bible. They were pejoratively known as Puritans for their seemingly stubborn insistence on moral and doctrinal purity.

The Puritans had hopes of a complete reformation of the church when they met with James I at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 to propose alternatives to episcopacy for church government. But James made it clear that he had no desire to see an opposing agenda erected in the church. He is quoted as saying that Presbyterianism "agreeth as well with a monarchy as God and the devil."[15] Dashed dreams of a Reformed English church meant that reformation-minded groups, feeling "betrayed and embittered", had to choose between separating from the English church or attempting to effect local reformation without drawing the attention of the church hierarchy.[16]

Among Puritans considering separation from the church of England was Henry Jacob (c.1563-1624), an Oxford graduate and parish minister.[17] From 1596-1599, Jacob interacted via debate with Francis Johnson[18] a Separatist Puritan who attempted to convince Jacob that the church of England's corruption was so great that it was not a true church and must be abandoned. Jacob's thought moved in that direction but did not arrive at the same extreme as Johnson. The failure of the Puritan hopes at Hampton Court pushed Jacob to accept that the Church of England could not be reformed, but Jacob continued to maintain that it was a true church.

Jacob and those of his persuasion became convinced of the right of local churches to govern themselves according to the dictates of the Scriptures. After failed attempts at petitioning James I for permission to establish churches free from the oversight of any

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[15] Michael Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 53.

[16] Stephen Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints: Radical Puritan and Separatist Ecclesiology 1570-1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 42. On the origins of Separatism and its relation to Puritanism, see Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints*; Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); M. M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism: A Chapter in the History of Idealism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Watts, *The Dissenters*; B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition: From the Marian Martyrs to the Pilgrim Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Visible Saints: The Congregational Way 1640-1660* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957). On Puritanism in Cambridge, see H.C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1972), 207-273. On Puritanism in Oxford, see Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism*, 23-43.

[17] See Stephen Wright, 'Jacob, Henry (1562/3–1624)', *ODNB*. Cf. also Walter Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches and Meeting Houses, in London, Westminster, and Southwark: Including the Lives of their Ministers, From the Rise of Nonconformity to the Present Time* (London: Printed for the Author, 1808), I:36-40.

[18] On Johnson, see Michael E. Moody, 'Johnson, Francis (bap. 1562, d. 1617)', *ODNB*.

synod, presbytery, or prelacy, in 1616 Henry Jacob led his church out from the national Church of England, though maintaining friendly ties to it. This has been called "semi-separatism," though Michael Watts warns against the use of such a term given that it would have been rejected by Jacob himself. Watts suggests the term "Jacobite" as a more appropriate replacement given that it was used in Jacob's day, and by Jacob himself.[19]

The Particular Baptists of the seventeenth century traced their origins to this church and its history. This church has often been called the Jacob/Lathrop/Jessey church, named for its first three pastors, Henry Jacob, John Lathrop (1584-1653), and Henry Jessey (1601-1663).[20] The roots of the Particular Baptists in English Separatism distance them from continental Anabaptists and English General Baptists.[21]

The testimony of their beginnings is chronicled in a manuscript entitled "An Old, MSS. Giving some Acco^{tt} of those Baptists who first formed themselves into distinct Congregations or Churches in London found among certain Paper given me [Benjamin Stinton] by M^{r} [Richard] Adams."[22]

From 1616, this manuscript goes on to describe the history of the church through its various phases of life. In 1624, Henry Jacob left the church for Virginia, succeeded two years later by John Lathrop. Government persecution placed Lathrop and many of his congregants in jail in 1632, and it was not until June of 1634 that he was set free upon the

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[19] Watts, *The Dissenters*, 53. Among the Jacobites were well known Puritans such as William Bradshaw, Paul Baynes, Robert Parker, and William Ames.

[20] On Henry Jessey see Edward Whiston, *The Life and Death of Mr. Henry Jessey* (n.p., 1671); Jason G. Duesing, *Counted Worthy: The Life and Work of Henry Jessey* (Mountain Home, AR: BorderStone Press, 2012); Duesing, *Henry Jessey: Puritan Chaplain, Independent and Baptist Pastor, Millenarian Politician and Prophet* (Mountain Home, AR: BorderStone Press, 2015); Stephen Wright, 'Jessey, Henry (1601–1663)', *ODNB*.

[21] On the genesis and development of the Particular Baptists see Stephen Wright, *The Early English Baptists, 1603-1649* (UK: Boydell, 2006); B.R. White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (Didcot, Oxfordshire: The Baptist Historical Society, 1996), 59-62; James M. Renihan *Edification and Beauty: The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675-1705* **(**Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2008), 1-36; Michael A. G. Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys, and Keach* (Leeds: Reformation Today, 1996), 15-32.

[22] ALRPCO D Stinton 1, Benjamin Stinton, *A Repository of Divers Historical Matters relating to the English Antipedobaptists* (1712), 10. This is commonly known as the "Kiffen Manuscript" or "Kiffen Memorandum." This manuscript is transcribed in Barrie R. White "Baptist Beginnings and the Kiffen Manuscript" *Baptist History and Heritage* 2 (Jan. 1967): 29-34; and Champlin Burrage, *Early English Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research (1550-1641)*, 2 vols. (New York: Russel & Russel, 1967 reprint), 2:292-305. Richard Adams copastored with Kiffen in Devonshire beginning in 1690. See W.T. Whitley, "Benjamin Stinton and his Baptist Friends," "Stinton's Historical Researches," "Records of the Jacob-Lathorp-Jessey Church 1616-1641," and "Debate on Infant Baptism, 1643" *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* 1.4 (January 1910): 193-245. Cf. also Whiston, *Mr. Henry Jessey*, 7. George W. Macalpine, "A.D. 1662 - Uniformity or Unity?" *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* 3.2 (October 1912):111-116.

condition that he leave the kingdom for the new world where he settled in New England.[23]

During Lathrop's imprisonment, in 1633 certain members left the church because they were "dissatisfied wth y^{e} Churches owning of English Parishes to be true Churches."[24] Later departures from the Jacob/Lathrop church in 1638 are recorded, though the reasons given are that those who left were "convinced that Baptism was not for Infants but professed Believers."[25] These members began a new church under John Spilsbury.[26] Spilsbury's church is considered the original Particular Baptist church.

At the same time, William Laud (1573-1645) rose to power in the Church of England in the 1620s, reaching the archbishopric in the 1630s. Laud imposed on the church an aggressive Arminian soteriology and a host of external rites and rituals, precipitating a strong reaction in the schools and churches of England. Priests and professors who resisted Laud were persecuted and removed from their parishes and positions.

During this time, as Puritans split off from the national church, willingly or unwillingly, they landed at varying degrees of distance from the Anglican establishment. Several priests' journeys ended with Spilsbury and they established churches closely connected to Spilsbury's. Hanserd Knollys, Benjamin Coxe, Samuel Fisher, Christopher Blackwood, and Edward Harrison were trained in the universities and ordained in the church of England.[27] They formed a core of educated leadership that worked alongside

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[23] Stinton, *Repository*, 3-6. The manuscript adds that about 30 members departed with Lathrop. Cf. also Isaac Backus, *A History of New-England With particular Reference to the Denominations of Christians called Baptists*, vol. 1, (Boston: Printed by Edward Draper, 1777), 106-107; Wilson, *The History and Antiquities of Dissenting Churches*, I:36-41.

[24] Stinton, *Repository*, 10. This represents a movement from semi-separatism to Separatism.

[25] Ibid. This belief is referred to as "credobaptism" in the rest of this work.

[26] Ibid. See also, James Renihan, "John Spilsbury (1593-c. 1662/1668)" in *The British Particular Baptists*, vol. 1, (ed. Michael A. G. Haykin, Springfield, MO: Particular Baptist Press), 21-37.

[27] Hanserd Knollys, Edward Harrison, Benjamin Coxe, Henry Jessey, Daniel Dyke, Samuel Fisher, Christopher Blackwood, and Thomas Hardcastle began their ministerial careers as Parish ministers ordained in the Church of England. The following Particular Baptists, and others closely associated with them, were university trained: Christopher Blackwood (B.A., M.A., Cambridge), Benjamin Coxe (B.A., M.A., Oxford), Daniel Dyke (B.A., M.A., Cambridge), Samuel Fisher (B.A., M.A., Cambridge), Thomas Hardcastle (B.A., Cambridge), Edward Harrison (B.A., Cambridge, M.A., Oxford), Henry Jacob (B.A., M.A., Oxford), Henry Jessey (B.A., M.A., Cambridge), Hanserd Knollys (Cambridge), John Lathrop (B.A., M.A., Cambridge), John Pendarves (B.A., Oxford), and John Tombes (B.A., M.A., Oxford). Knollys was ordained in the Church of England as a "literate"; he was university trained but had not graduated with a degree. This refutes Daniel Neal's misrepresentation of the Particular Baptists. Neal said, "The Advocates of this Doctrine were, for the most part, of the meanest of the People; their Preachers were generally illiterate." Daniel Neal, *The history of the Puritans or Protestant non-conformists, From The Reformation To The Death of Queen Elizabeth* (London: Richard Hett, 1736), III:162. Crosby took note of Neal's statement and replied "What a malicious slander is this!…To me it seems unchristian, without ground, a fact unexamined, a

lay pastors, such as William Kiffen, who were often merchants or tradesmen. By 1644, seven churches, including Spilsbury's, shared a common confession of faith.[28]

The original church begun by Henry Jacob, from which Spilsbury and others had departed, eventually arrived at credobaptist convictions as well. In 1637, a year prior to the formation of Spilsbury's congregation, Henry Jessey was appointed as the pastor of the Jacob/Lathrop church.[29] Over the next seven years, additional members became convinced that only those who profess faith in Jesus should be baptized. During this time, Jessey himself underwent a development in his own consideration of the issue, but the transition was gradual.[30] In 1640 the church now under Jessey split into two by a "mutual decision," half remaining with Praisegod Barebones, the other half with Henry Jessey and Richard Blunt.[31] Jessey's biography claims that the main reason for this split was that the church's size exposed it to government persecution.[32]

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judgment formed without any authority produced to support the fact." Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, I:v. On the education and life of a Cambridge student in the early seventeenth century, see Stephen J. Casselli, *Divine Rule Maintained: Anthony Burgess, Covenant Theology, and the Place of the Law in Reformed Scholasticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2016), 20-29. On the same for an Oxford student, see Crawford Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism: Experiences of Defeat* (UK: Oxford University Press, 2016), 30-36.

[28] Stephen Wright has argued that lines between Particular and General Baptists ought not to be drawn so closely or rigidly prior to 1644. Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, 11. Christopher Hill has expressed similar cautions. Cf. Christopher Hill, "History and Denominational History" *Baptist Quarterly* 22.2 (April, 1967), 65-71. Matthew Bingham has noted, however, that the literature of the Baptists prior to 1644 indicates that "even at an earlier stage the division between the two baptistic groups was, *pace* Wright, very much driven by soteriological rather than ecclesiological differences." Matthew Bingham, "English Baptists and the Struggle for Theological Authority, 1642–1646" *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (2017): 9. It is certainly true that the developments taking place between 1638-1644 are quite fluid, but the core group established by Spilsbury pinpoints a definite qualitative theological identity to which later quantitative additions were made leading towards 1644. Additionally, Bingham has demonstrated that the Baptists' Confession of Faith was published in 1644 in response to the Westminster Assembly. A consensus and identity already existed, but the Assembly's call for orthodoxy brought it to public visibility in 1644. For more on this, see chapter three.

[29] Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, I:309-310. Cf. Whiston, *Mr. Henry Jessey*, 8-9.

[30] Jessey's move to credobaptism is also recorded in Whiston, *Mr. Henry Jessey*, 83.

[31] Stinton, *Repository*, 10.

[32] "This Congregation being at this time grown so numerous that they could not well meet together in any one place, without being discovered by the *Nimrods* of the Earth; after many consultations among themselves, and advice taken with others, but especially asking councel from above; Upon the 18*th* day of the third Month called *May*, 1640. they divided themselves equally, and became two Congregations, the one whereof continued with Mr. *Jessey*, the other joined themselves to Mr. *Praise God Barebone,* each of the Churches renewing their *Covenant* and choosing distinct *Officers* of their own from among themselves." Whiston, *Mr. Henry Jessey*, 10-11.

Despite the practicality of this division into two congregations, doctrinal differences played a role in the departure of the members who went with Jessey. The Kiffen Manuscript makes it clear that Richard Blunt was convinced of believers' baptism, including the mode of dipping. Jessey, however, was not convinced at that time. It was not until 1642 that Jessey came to the conviction that dipping was the proper mode of baptism, and even then it was not until 1644 that he was convinced that believers alone were its proper recipients.[33] In the final stages of his consideration of this matter, Jessey consulted theologians as eminent as "Mr Nye, Mr Tho Goodwin, Mr Burroughs, Mr Greenhill, Mr Cradock, Mr Carter, & with Mr Jackson, Mr Bolton, &c."[34] Upon reaching full credobaptist conviction, Jessey was baptized by Hanserd Knollys in 1645.[35]

A proper understanding of the Particular Baptists' identity must consider the context of their origins in the Separatist wing of the Puritan movement in the Church of England. Christian worship must conform to the word of God. Where there is not true biblical worship, a reformed church must be established. John Spilsbury's church, emerging from Puritan Separatism, offers a historically and theologically identifiable lineage for the Particular Baptists. It was a church built on independent church government and the baptism of professing believers alone.[36] Spilsbury's congregation served as a unifying source of leadership and identity to which other Puritans joined themselves, forming the churches that came to be known as Particular Baptists.

While confident in their doctrinal distinctives, the Particular Baptists were eager to establish their legitimacy among Presbyterians and Independents and at the same time to distance themselves from Arminians, Socinians, and Anabaptists. This is evident not only from their profuse use and praise of Reformed writers throughout their works but especially in the titles, prefaces, and content of their confessions of faith. The First London Baptist Confession, published in 1644, stated its identity plainly, *A Confession of Faith of Seven Congregations or Churches of Christ in London, Which are Commonly (But Unjustly) Called Anabaptists*.[37] This was necessary because "All that an opponent of the Baptists had to do was say the name 'Münster', and all of the supposed horrors of that sad city would

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[33] Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, 78-79. Cf. Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, I:309-312.

[34] Stinton, *Repository*, 28.

[35] Ibid. Whiston's biography of Jessey adds "though most of his own Congregation at that time was most of them for Infant Baptism." Whiston, *Henry Jessey*, 83. On Knollys, see chapter 3.

[36] On the practical ecclesiology of the Particular Baptists see James Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*.

[37] *A Confession of Faith of Seven Congregations or Churches of Christ in London, Which are Commonly (But Unjustly) Called Anabaptists* (London: 1644).

be imputed to their English 'counterparts'."[38] The Particular Baptists' confession of faith was an attempt to vindicate their name in the eyes of the orthodox.[39]

The Second London Baptist Confession, published in 1677, demonstrated the same motivation, but with an even greater amount of continuity in content with the Presbyterians and Independents. After explaining that they agreed with the method and matter of the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Declaration, they stated,

> We did in like manner conclude it best to follow their example in making use of the very same words with them both, in these articles…wherein our faith and doctrine is the same with theirs, and this we did, the more abundantly, to manifest our consent with both, in all the fundamental articles of the Christian Religion, as also with many others, whose orthodox confessions have been published to the world; on the behalf of the Protestants in divers Nations and Cities.[40]

There is an intentional effort to self-identify as Protestants, Reformed, and Baptists.

The primary importance of surveying the origins and identity of the Particular Baptists is that their covenant theology reflects the same patterns. The Particular Baptists did not develop their covenant theology in isolation. Rather, they intentionally appealed to the Reformed tradition as the basis of their beliefs.[41]

Due to the affinity of the Particular Baptists to the paedobaptists, and in order to place them carefully within that context, it is necessary to begin this work by surveying the

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[38] Renihan, *Edification and Beauty*, 7. Though the events of Münster were from far away and long ago, small pamphlets spread the fear that the same events would transpire in England. Cf. Anon., *A Warning For England Espescially For London in the Famous History of the Frantic Anabaptists* (n.p., 1642), 25. After detailing the gruesome history of the Anabaptists at Münster, the book ended with these words, "So let all the factious and seditious enemies of the Church and state perish: but upon the Head of King Charles let the Crowne flourish. Amen."

[39] On the Particular Baptists' attempts to gain respectability and orthodox credibility in the 1640s and 1650s, see Bustin, *Paradox and Perseverance*, 68-169.

[40] *A Confession of Faith Put Forth by the Elders and Brethren of Many Congregations of Christians (Baptized Upon Profession of their Faith) in London and the Country* (London: 1677) , iii-iv of an unpaginated preface.

[41] Brandon Jones has expressed this helpfully. "While there is much literature that defends two traditions of covenant theology during the period, reassessments of the primary sources reveal a single tradition in which there is much variety on the number of, conception of, relationships between, and terminology for covenants throughout the seventeenth century. In light of these reassessments the variety within this tradition should also extend to Baptist accounts that have believers as the only proper subjects of baptism. These Baptist versions of covenant theology still honor that which unites all versions of covenant theology—the belief in one people of God under the headship of Christ with distinctions between the old and new covenants, among which is the belief that baptism is a sign of the new covenant rather than the old covenant. Baptist versions of covenant theology just add to the diversity of the greater tradition by focusing on how covenant theology can support believer baptism." Jones, "Baptist Sacramental Theology," 128-129.

logic and hermeneutics of Reformed covenant theology from its early stages moving toward the 1640s. This provides a paradigm of unity and diversity within which the Particular Baptists can be understood properly.

Chapter One: Unity and Diversity in Reformed Covenant Theology

Introduction

By the 1640s, Reformed federalism was a well-trodden path. The Reformers and the theologians of Early Orthodoxy had laid an ample foundation upon which the theologians of High Orthodoxy continued to build.[1] While not a central dogma or an organizing principle for Reformed orthodoxy as a whole, covenant enjoyed a prominent place among its theological loci,[2] affecting and being affected by the system. For example, covenant was used to explain the significance of the sacraments,[3] to justify the baptism of infants and the identity of the church throughout history,[4] to demonstrate the theology of salvation, and to describe the contours of salvation history.

This chapter argues that Reformed federalism developed from a common foundation, the distinction between the law and the gospel, and that the unity and diversity of covenant theology in the Reformed tradition derive from the use of this distinction dogmatically, historically, and covenantally. Approaching Reformed federalism from this perspective provides a functional model that accounts for the development of various branches within Reformed covenant theology, as well as their diverse terminology, over a considerable span of time.[5]

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[1] Richard Muller divides the Reformation and post-Reformation eras into The Reformation (1523-1565), Early Orthodoxy (1565-1640), High Orthodoxy (1640-1700), and Late Orthodoxy (1700-1790). See his *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003).

[2] Wolfgang Musculus (1497-1563) was the first to assign covenant its own locus in his *Loci Commvnes in usus sacræ Theologiæ candidatorum parati* (Basel: 1560), 178-183.

[3] Heinrich Bullinger, *Common places of Christian Religion* (trans. Iohn Stockwood London: Tho. East and H. Middleton, 1572), 192. "The thing signified…is the work of our salvation gotten us by Christe…wherby wee are…receyved into the covenant."

[4] Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) said, "Idem ergo foedus quod olim cum populo israelitico, in nouissimis temporibus nobiscum pepigit, ut unus essemus cum eis populus: una ecclesia, & unum foedus quoque [sic]; haberemus." Huldrich Zwingli, *In Catabaptistarvm Strophas Elenchus* (Tiguri: Christophori Froschouer, 1527), 147.

[5] For a detailed overview of historical Reformed Covenant theology, see Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*. Woolsey's work is the most comprehensive survey and investigation of the development of Reformed covenant theology from the Reformation to the Westminster Assembly. Woolsey helpfully took note of the prominence of the law-gospel contrast in the Reformed writers' covenant theology, but he so heavily emphasized the unity of the tradition that he underrepresented and underemphasized its diversity. The trajectories latent in early theologians are not properly traced or identified. John Cameron is especially underrepresented. This chapter seeks to explain not only the unity, but also the diversity, of the Reformed tradition in such a way that the continuity and discontinuity of the Particular Baptists' covenant theology with that tradition is identifiable and explicable. See also, R. Scott Clark, "Christ and Covenant: Federal

The Law and the Gospel: Dogmatically, Historically, and Covenantally

Beginning with Martin Luther, at the heart of the Reformation was an inviolable contrast between the law and the gospel as two opposite paths to a right standing before God. This was one of the strongest arguments mounted by Protestants as a polemic against Rome and a reason for departure from it.[6] Luther said,

> The law and the Gospell are two contrary doctrines…For Moses with his law is a severe exactor, requiring of us that we should worke and that we should give…Contrariwise, the Gospell giveth freely and requireth of us nothing els but to hold out our hands and to take that which is offered. Now, to exacte and to give, to take and to offer are cleane contrary and can not stand together.[7]

Righteousness was obtained in one of two ways: a perfect record of personal obedience, or a perfect record of imputed obedience received by faith. This dogmatic distinction between the law and the gospel, often expressed as contrary "doctrines," is the foundational bedrock and common denominator of Reformed covenantal writers. And it is a point of complete connection and continuity with the Particular Baptists.

In addition to the dogmatic contrast between the law and the gospel, the Reformed also spoke of the law and the gospel in a historical sense, referring to two historical time periods, the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament could be identified as the "law" in a broad sense due to the prominence and pedagogical function of the law of Moses during that time. And the New Testament could be identified as the "gospel" in a

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Theology" in *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy* ed., Herman Selderhuis (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 403-428; Geerhardus Vos, "The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology" in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*. ed. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 234-267. On specific theologians, see more below.

[6] "The doctrine of Faith that iustifieth without works, ought to bee retained unmingled, and uncorrupt in the Church, because…it is most Catholique, and altogether unreprooveable." Heinrich Bullinger, *Fiftie Godlie and Learned Sermons, Divided Into Five Decades, Containing The chiefe and principall points of Christian Religion, written in three seuerall Tomes or Sections* (trans. H.I., student in divinity; London: Ralph Newberie, 1587), 559. (4:1). Modern reappraisals of the law-grace contrast, often known as the "New Perspective on Paul" regard the Reformation as misinterpreting Paul. Cf. N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013).

[7] Martin Luther, *A Commentarie of M. Doctor Martin Lvther Vpon The Epistle of S. Paul to the Galathians* (London: Thomas Vautroullier, 1575), fol. 97. Chris Caughey stated, "Any account of Reformed covenant theology must begin with Martin Luther's articulation of the distinction between the law and the gospel." Christopher E. Caughey, "Puritan Responses to Antinomianism in the Context of Reformed Covenant Theology: 1630-1696)," (PhD Dissertation, Dublin: Trinity College, 2012), 25.

broad sense due to the clarity afforded by the incarnation of Christ's earthly ministry, and the subsequent writings of the New Testament.

A proper understanding of Reformed covenant theology must account for the interplay of these two distinctions.[8] The dogmatic contrast between the law and the gospel was mutually exclusive. Righteousness is obtained either by works or faith. But the historical contrast between the law and the gospel was not to be equated with this mutual exclusivity. Though the pre and post-incarnation phases of redemptive history were different, the historical distinction between the law and the gospel did not teach that the gospel was absent from the Old Testament or that the law was absent from the New Testament. To the contrary, the law and the gospel as doctrines of righteousness ran through the entirety of human history (the gospel being revealed immediately after the fall of man in Eden). The dogmatic contrast between the law and the gospel permeated the historical contrast between the law and the gospel but was not identical with it.

The logic and vocabulary of Reformed covenant theology was built on the contrast between the law and the gospel in its dogmatic and historical contrasts. As the law and the gospel could refer to opposite doctrines, so also some theologians spoke of a *legal* covenant and an *evangelical* covenant as two opposite covenants relating to righteousness. Later writers expressed the same truths in different terms. They spoke of the *foedus operum* and *foedus gratiae*, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. These covenants were opposed dogmatically, commonly distinguished by a difference in substance, essence, and condition.

The dogmatic distinction of the law and the gospel is therefore the foundation for Reformed covenant theology's substance logic. A covenant based on law cannot be a covenant based on promise (i.e., gospel) and vice versa. Thus, as the law cannot be the gospel, so also the legal covenant cannot be the evangelical covenant; the covenant of works cannot be the covenant of grace. This logic runs through the Reformed writers and is used repeatedly in the arguments of the Particular Baptists and their opponents.

The historical distinction of the law and the gospel was incorporated into the grammar of covenant theology by distinguishing historical periods, commonly called "administrations" or "dispensations," within the covenant of grace.[9] The administration of the covenant primarily referred to the external organization of the covenant. For this

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[8] Willem J. van Asselt stated that the *ordo salutis* and the *ordo temporum* or *historia salutis* "seem to be the two characteristic features of a fully developed and mature covenant theology." Willem J. van Asselt, "Covenant Theology as Relational Theology: The Contributions of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) and John Owen (1618-1683) to a Living Reformed Theology," in Kelly M. Kapic and Mark Jones, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 66.

[9] For some authors, the legal covenant and evangelical covenant did not refer to two opposite covenants, but two historical stages of the covenant of salvation or the covenant of grace. It is important to pay attention to how this language is used, given that the dogmatic and historical uses are similar but quite different. See especially Calvin and Beza below.

reason, most Reformed writers identified two administrations within the covenant of grace, marked by the institution of circumcision with Abraham and the institution of new ordinances by Christ. Some authors subdivided these two administrations into more detailed epochs.

The law and the gospel, distinguished dogmatically and historically, stand behind the common formulation of the covenant of grace being one in substance, but two in administration. The emphasis of this formulation was to affirm that the substance (*substantia*) of the covenant, i.e., salvation in Christ, was the same before and after the incarnation of Christ. What changed between the two periods were the positive laws that God had delivered to Israel and the New Testament church respectively. These variables were commonly called the accidents or accidentals (*accidentalia*) of the covenant. For example, in the paedobaptist scheme baptism replaced circumcision and the Lord's Supper replaced the Passover as new forms of the same thing.

Reformed theologians were united in the doctrine of salvation, or the dogmatic contrast between the law and the gospel and their accompanying conditions of works and faith. But their covenantal models did not develop uniformly. They branched out in diversity when discussing the law and the gospel covenantally by relating the law and the gospel to the covenants of redemptive history. The diversity of these strands should not be thought of as competing federal theologies, or even separate federal theologies, but rather varying trends or shades within the context of Reformed orthodoxy.

The most common area of divergence and diversity was the relationship of the old covenant, the covenant made with Israel through Moses, to the covenant of grace. As the substance logic of the law and the gospel was applied to the Mosaic covenant, Reformed theologians wrestled with whether the Mosaic covenant simply contained the law, or whether it was a covenant founded on the law. For some, therefore, the old covenant was a part of the first administration of the covenant of grace. For others, it was a covenant substantially distinct from, and dogmatically opposed to, the covenant of grace.

The question arose from key biblical passages such as Jeremiah 31, Galatians 4, and Romans 10. The prophet Jeremiah claimed that the new covenant would not be like the old covenant. And the Apostle Paul drew a dogmatic contrast between the law and the gospel from the old and new covenants. Writers had to wrestle with the fact that what some considered to be simply two phases (historically) of the same covenant seemed to be two different covenants (dogmatically/substantially) as portrayed by the Scriptures. While Reformed writers were united in their doctrine of justification, or the law and the gospel dogmatically, they differed in their views of the relationship of the Old Testament covenants to the covenant of grace. A survey of Reformed theologians will demonstrate the development of unity and diversity within Reformed covenant theology.

Heinrich Bullinger

The first-generation reformers Johannes Oecolampadius and Huldrich Zwingli both employed the concept of covenant in their writings.[10] Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), successor to Zwingli in Zurich, developed and expanded upon previous work.[11] Bullinger's covenantal thought reflects the law-gospel foundation of protestant orthodoxy and shows signs of the developments that would be articulated by later theologians.

Bullinger taught the Protestant doctrine of the law and the gospel from Paul's contrast in Romans 10 between the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith. Bullinger said, "The law therefore is grounded upon works, whereunto it seemeth to attribute righteousness. But bicause no man doth in workes fulfill the Lawe, therefore is no man iustified by works, or by the Law." He continued, "The Gospell is not grounded upon workes. For sinners acknowledge nothing in themselves but sin and wickedness."[12]

Like other early covenant theologians, Bullinger mainly spoke of one covenant, a covenant of salvation that remained the same throughout history, changing in outward accidental features. Bullinger said, "In the verie substance truely thou canst finde no diversitie: the difference which is betwixt them, doth consist in the maner of administration, in a few accidents and certaine circumstances."[13] This is the historical distinction between the law and the gospel.

Though treating only one covenant in his theology, Bullinger taught the building blocks of what would later be called the covenant of works. When asking the question of to what end the law was given to Adam, Bullinger said, "For in the lawe hee declareth what he would have him to do….that he may escape death, and liue in felicitie and perfect happinesse. For which cause also he provided that the law should be a plain and easie commandment."[14] He added, "He shewed him the tree as a sacrament or signe of that, which he inoined him by the giuing of the lawe."[15] God gave Adam a law, suspended a

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[10] On Oecolampadius, see Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 210-214. On Zwingli, see Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 214-228. See also, Lyle Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2005), 31-35.

[11] Lyle Bierma says, "Bullinger's understanding of the covenant was essentially Zwinglian, though somewhat more carefully developed and complete than that of his mentor." Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 35.

[12] Bullinger, *Decades*, 548. (4:1) Heinrich Bullinger referred to the law and the gospel as "the two doctrines." Bullinger, *Decades*, 437. Cf. also "The Gospell is the heavenlie preaching of Gods grace to us warde, wherein it is declared to all the worlde being set in the wrath and indignation of God, that God the father of heaven is pleased in his onelie begotten sonne our Lorde Christ Jesus…and in him hath given us all things belonging to a blessed life and eternall salvation…upon condition that we acknowledging our sinnes, do soundly and surely beleeve in him." Bullinger, *Decades*, 526-527. (4:1).

[13] Bullinger, *Decades*, 435. (3:8).

[14] Bullinger, *Decades*, 488. (3:10).

[15] Ibid.

reward upon obedience to that law, and provided a visible sign (sacrament) to fortify the commitment and relationship between them.[16] In Bullinger's thought the basic building blocks of the dogmatic contrast of the law and the gospel are present, while his expressions hint at later more developed covenantal frameworks.

With regard to salvation history, Bullinger's thought is indicative of later diversity. Describing the state of Israel under the law, or the old covenant administration of the covenant of salvation, Bullinger said that "Although they were free in spirit before the Lord, yet notwithstanding they did in outwarde shew differ little or nothing from very bondslaves, by reason of the burden of the law that lay upon their shoulders."[17] Later he described this special state of affairs in more detail. He said, "it may bee easilie observed, that the law appointing out a certaine land peculiarlie separated from other nations, did promise to the old fathers the possession of the same, so long as they did keepe the law: but if they did transgresse the law, then did it threaten that they should be rotted up, & utterly cast out of that good land."[18]

Bullinger identified a temporary legal arrangement in which the land promised to Abraham could be maintained or lost based on obedience to the law of God. In fact, Bullinger considered this to be "easilie observed." But he confined this arrangement to earthly matters, in no way affecting justification by faith or the covenant of salvation. This arrangement was designed to teach them about heavenly or spiritual blessings, not designed to be an end in itself.[19]

John Calvin

John Calvin (1509-1564) stands in continuity with Zwingli and Bullinger in his dogmatic use of the distinction between the law and the gospel and his historical comparison of the

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[16] Woolsey goes so far as to say, "The only difference between Bullinger's position and that of later 'covenant theologians' here is the appellation 'covenant of works.'" Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 248.

[17] Bullinger, *Decades*, 437. (3:8). Bullinger's comments are very similar to Calvin's in his commentary on Galatians. Bullinger's words, in the Latin edition of the Decades are: "Libertas patrum caeremoniarum mole opprimebatur, aut abscondebatur, ut quanquam liberi essent animis coram deo, externa tamen specie nihil differrent a servis, haerentibus adhuc in humeris ipsorum oneribus legis." Bullinger, *Sermonum Decas tertia* (Tiguri: Froschouer, 1550), 87. (3:8). Calvin said, "Quare sancti illi patres, utcunque intus liberi essent coram Deo, externo tamen aspectu nihil differebant a servis: atque ita matris conditionem referebant." Calvin, *Ioannis Calvini Commentarii in quatuor Pauli Epistolas: Ad Galatas, Ad Ephesios, Ad Philippenses, Ad Colossenses* (Geneva: Ioannem Girardum, 1548), 73.

[18] Bullinger, *Decades*, 439. (3:8) Later he called the Ten Commandments "the conditions of the league." Cf. Bullinger, *Decades*, 356. (3:6)

[19] "Therefore even the ceremonial laws also led them to Christ, testifying and teaching them that he alone doth cleanse us from all our sins. Whereupon I conclude that the offices of Moses and of the law both was and is…to lead us to Christ." Bullinger, *Decades*, 403. 3:8.

old and new testaments.[20] Dogmatically, Calvin stated that "The righteousnesse of fayth and workes doth so differ, that when the one is stablished, the other must needes be overthrowen."[21] Historically, Calvin considered it very important to distinguish the law from the gospel as well. He stated,

> And hereby also is their error convinced, which do never otherwise compare the law with the gospel, but as they compare the merits of works with the free imputation of righteousness. Although indeed this comparison of contraries be not to be rejected….But the gospel did not succeed in place of the whole law, that it should bring any diverse mean of salvation, but rather to confirm and prove to be of force, what so ever the law had promised, and to join the body to the shadows.[22]

This historical diversity did not interrupt the dogmatic unity of the one covenant of salvation. He said "The couenant of al the fathers so differeth nothing from oures in substance & in the matter it selfe, that it is altogether one and the selfe same: but the ministration is diverse."[23]

One of Calvin's unique contributions to covenantal thought, however, was to express the historical distinction between the law and the gospel in a more explicitly covenantal way. He spoke of the "covenant of the law" and "the covenant of the gospel." Calvin said, "Here is to bee seen, in what poynte the couenant of the lawe is compared with the couenant of the Gospell."[24] He then proceeded to reaffirm that they did not differ in substance, but rather in outward accidental differences. The covenant of the law, or the covenant under the time of the law, was a legal burden of ceremonies proclaiming condemnation and death. But it did not do so to the exclusion of mercies, life, and promises of forgiveness and redemption. Drawing especially from Galatians 4 and Paul's allegorical contrast of two mothers and their sons, Calvin summarized,

> But the summe commeth to this effect, that the olde testamente dyd stricke into consciences feare and tremblinge: but by the benefite of the newe testament it commeth to passe, that thei are made ioyefull. The olde did holde consciences

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[20] For an in-depth study of Calvin's covenantal thought, see Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 253-343.

[21] John Calvin, *The Institvtion of Christian Religion* (trans. London: Reinolde Wolfe and Richard Harrison, 1561) fol. 178r. III. 11. 13. Spelling updated.

[22] Calvin, *The Institution*, fol. 68r. II. 9. 4. Spelling updated.

[23] Calvin, *The Institution*, fol. 69r. II. 10. 2. Bierma states, "Calvin understand[s] the covenant of grace in essentially the same way as Zwingli and Bullinger." Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 44.

[24] Calvin, *The Institution*, 77r. II. 11. 4. "Hic videndum est qua parte fœdus legale cum fœdere Euangelico."

> bounde unto the yoke of bondage, by the lyberalitie of the newe thei are discharged of bondage, and brought into freedom.[25]

Calvin employed the Protestant dogmatic distinction between the law and the gospel.[26] And he was especially sensitive to the acute differences between the covenant of the law and the covenant of the gospel, or the law and the gospel distinguished historically. Through the law as given by Moses, the covenant people of God were temporarily placed under a legal yoke of bondage, a yoke which was abrogated and removed in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Theodore Beza

Calvin's Genevan successor, Theodore Beza (1519-1605) perpetuated these arguments.[27] Beza contrasted the law and the gospel as two "doctrines." The law "declares unto us the obedience and perfect righteousness, which we owe to his majesty and to our neighbors, under a changeable condition, that is to say, either of life eternal…or else death eternal."[28] The gospel "declares to us, that [God] will save us freely by his only Son, so that we embrace and accept him by faith, as our only wisdom, righteousness, [and] sanctification."[29]

Beza stepped forward in covenantal thought by calling these two doctrines, "two covenants." While summarizing the same points given above Beza said, "The law pronounces us blessed and happy in fulfilling it perfectly…the gospel promises us salvation in believing…Now these two covenants, that is to say, to do that which the law commands, or believe that which God offers in Jesus Christ….[30] This was a dogmatic contrast between law and gospel, expressed covenantally.

Elsewhere Beza spoke of the law as a covenant. Beza asked, "But although the hyre of eternall life be not dew for the worthines of the very workes: yet is it dew at leastwyse by couenant." And he asked a clarifying question, "What couenant meene you I beseeche you." The answer is "The couenant of the lawe, which is, *Do this and thou shalt live*: And.

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[25] Calvin, *The Institution*, 79.r. II. 11. 9.

[26] Like Bullinger, Calvin's words regarding God's dealings with Adam differ from later theologians only in terminology. Though the name itself, "covenant of works" is not present in his theology, all of the building blocks are. Cf. Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 282. "It might well be asked, what more is needed to constitute a covenant of works arrangement?"

[27] For more on Beza see Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 344-395.

[28] Theodore Beza, *A Briefe and Pithie Summe of Christian Faith* (London: Roger Ward, 1584), 82-83.

[29] Beza, *A Briefe and Pithie Summe*, 83.

[30] Beza, *A Briefe and Pithie Summe*, 87.

If thou wilt enter into life, kepe the commaundementes."[31] Beza explained that no one could keep this covenant because it demands perfection. Beza's identification of the law and the gospel as two covenants is one step closer to the later formulations of the covenant of grace and the covenant of works. But it is important to remember that Beza's dogmatic law-covenant and gospel-covenant were not Calvin's historical legal covenant and evangelical covenant.

Despite this noted difference, Beza followed Calvin in distinguishing two historical phases within the gospel covenant. He said, "Ther was neuer but one couenant of saluation between God & man if wee consider the substance thereof, which is Jesus Christ. But in consideration of the circumstance, there are two testaments or couenants…The one is called the old: the other the new."[32] Beza and Calvin spoke of the legal and evangelical covenants in two different, but not contradictory senses. Calvin's use was historical. Beza's was dogmatic. Both saw the old and new covenants as two administrations of the one covenant of salvation.

Wolfgang Musculus

Wolfgang Musculus expanded Reformed covenant theology.[33] Foundational to his thought was the dogmatic distinction between the law and the gospel. He said,

> The lawe giuen by Moses, commaundyng and pressyng, threateneth curse unto the disobedient…Wherefore there is so greate difference betwixt the lawe & the gospell, that they which do beleeue in Christ are sayde to be not under the lawe, but under grace: And that they do fall from grace, whiche do seeke their iustifying in the lawe. The lawe chargeth, presseth, and curseth: the Gospell preacheth to them that beleeue it, grace and remission of their sinnes.[34]

Here Musculus said nothing new. His developments were found elsewhere.

Musculus' advance in covenantal thought was to distinguish between God's general covenant with mankind and God's special covenant with the elect. The general covenant was God's covenant with Noah to preserve the earth and its creatures. It was general "bycause it concerneth the whole world: and it may be called earthly and temporal,

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[31] Beza, *A Booke of Christian Questions and Answers* (London: William How, 1572), 56v.

[32] Beza, *A Briefe and Pithie Summe*, 15.

[33] Bierma provides a short but helpful treatment of Musculus' covenantal thought in *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 49-55.

[34] Musculus, *Common Places of Christian Religion* (trans. Iohn Man; London: Henry Bynneman, 1578), 338-339.

bycause it doth touch the stedfastnes of earthly matters."[35] The special covenant was the covenant of salvation.

Within the special covenant, Musculus distinguished three administrations rather than two. He acknowledged that these administrations seemed so distinct that one might think that there were actually three covenants, rather than three administrations of one covenant. He replied to this hypothetical objection,

> Whereas we doe say that the couenaunte of Abraham is one and eternall, there seemeth to bee a repugnancye in it, forasmuche as there was afterwardes ordeyned another couenaunte under Moses, whych endured untill Christe, and after that of Moses there was yet an other broughte in by Christe….Whereof it shoulde seeme that there be three rather than one alone, of Abraham, of Moses, and of Christ.[36]

In further pursuit of this question, Musculus brought up Galatians 4 and stated, "In deede the Apostle dothe appoynte two Testamentes, that is, two Couenauntes: one whyche was instituted in the mount of Sina, the other in Zion."[37] But he concluded,

> Yet it followeth not thereof, that there be three couenauntes of substance, concernying the saluation of mankynde….There is one onelye and perpetuall Couenaunte of God….But the orderyng of thys one Couenaunte…is not one and perpetuall, but was…Onewyse before the lawe, an otherwise in the law, and an other wise after the law.[38]

Musculus thus maintained the argument that the covenant of salvation was singular throughout all of history, and that its contours could be reduced simply to changes in "ordering" or administration, three in particular.

Musculus was sensitive to tensions in his construct. In particular, he was willing to distinguish the first two phases of the covenantal administrations relative to the law: before the law, and under the law. The law given by Moses was so unique that it deserved special mention as its own administration rather than being collapsed into the first external institution of the covenant with Abraham through circumcision.[39]

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[35] Musculus, *Common Places*, 285.

[36] Musculus, *Common Places*, 290-291.

[37] Musculus, *Common Places*, 291.

[38] Ibid.

[39] At the same time, Musculus was quite clear that the Mosaic covenant was not "any other couenant brought in more than the first," rather "the ordering of the firste…was encreased and made more large and ample, by the comming of the lawe." Musculus, *Common Places*, 292.

One of Musculus' reasons for treating the covenant under Moses in a special manner is that he considered the biblical term "the old covenant" to refer purely to the covenant under Moses, and not the covenant under Abraham. Thus he explained the contrast between the old and new covenants in Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 8 as the transition from the covenant under Moses to the covenant under Christ.[40] The old and new covenants were terms relative to each other, the second and third administrations of the special covenant of God.

Zacharias Ursinus

Zacharias Ursinus (1534-1583), who wrote soon after the publication of Musculus' *Loci Communes*[41], made a significant contribution to Reformed covenant theology.[42] Having studied with and known many of the authors previously mentioned (Philip Melanchthon, Calvin, Bullinger and Peter Martyr Vermigli),[43] Ursinus was well placed to stand on the shoulders of those who had gone before him. Whereas Musculus had given covenant its own *locus*, Ursinus employed covenant extensively, integrating it into his system of theology more fully and explicitly than previous authors.

The categories and terminology that we have been employing thus far, the law and the gospel distinguished dogmatically and historically, are more clearly pronounced in Ursinus than in other authors. While describing the difference between the law and the gospel, dogmatically, Ursinus stated that they differ in the "kind of doctrine; or in the subject or matter which they deliver." He said,

> The law saith…Doe this, and liue. The Gospell saith, Onely beleeue…The lawe promiseth life to them that are iust & righteous in themselues, or with a condition of our owne righteousnesse, and perfect obedience performed by vs. Hee that doth them shall liue in them. If thou wilt enter into life, keepe the commandements. The Gospell promiseth the same life to them that are iustified by faith in Christ, or with condition of anothers righteousnes, to wit Christs, applied vnto vs by faith.[44]

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[40] Musculus, *Common Places*, 293.

[41] Richard Muller, "Divine Covenants, Absolute and Conditional: John Cameron and the Early Orthodox Development of Reformed Covenant Theology." *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 17 (2006), 19.

[42] On Ursinus' covenant theology, see Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 55-62; Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 399-420.

[43] Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 400, 404.

[44] Zacharias Ursinus, *The Summe of Christian Religion* (trans. Henrie Parrie; London: H.L., 1617), 218.

This is a difference of substance, distinguishing two different ways of attaining the same thing: a right-standing before God. They are two opposite paths (law and gospel) with two opposite conditions (works and faith).

When proceeding to speak of the covenant of grace, or the covenant of salvation, Ursinus stated that "The couenant of God is but one in Substance and matter, but two in Circumstances."[45] Later he described the two circumstantial phases as the old and new covenants. He said, "There are said to be two Couenants, the Old and the New; as concerning the circumstances, and those conditions which are lesse principall, which are the forme of administration."[46] Then he distinguished the old and the new covenants under the categories of the law and the gospel. He said,

> Heere is to bee obserued, that the olde Testament or Couenant is in Scripture oftentimes taken…for the Lawe, in respect of that part which is especially handled there. For in the olde Testament the Law was more vrged, and there were many parts thereof; the Gospell was then more obscure. Contrariwise, the new Testament or Couenant is for the most part taken for the Gospell.[47]

For Ursinus, as for those before him, the law and the gospel was a dogmatic contrast, not to be mingled. At the same time, it was a historical contrast closely related to the dogmatic contrast but quite distinct from it.

What truly set Ursinus apart was his discussion of the *foedus naturale* or the *foedus creationis*. He stated that "The law contains the covenant of nature (*foedus naturale*), which was made by God with man in creation."[48] This covenant is known by nature, demands perfect obedience, and promises eternal life. This is simply a new name given to a concept already explained in Ursinus' description of the law. Similar to Beza, Ursinus' treatment of the law and the gospel sometimes employed the category of covenant, and in other places it was called a doctrine.[49] But going further than Beza, Ursinus' use of the term

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[45] Ursinus, *The Svmme of Christian Religion*, 209.

[46] Ursinus, *The Summe of Christian Religion*, 210.

[47] Ursinus, *The Summe of Christian Religion*, 212.

[48] Zacharias Ursinus, *Catechesis, summa theologiae, per quaestiones et responsiones exposita: sive capita religionis Christianae continens*, in *D. Zachariae Ursini…Opera theologica, quibus orthodoxae religionis capita perspicue & breviter explicantur*, ed. Q. Reuter, 3 vols. (Heidelberg: Lancellot, 1612), 1:14. Quoted in Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 411.

[49] Ursinus also calls the moral law a "doctrine" in *The Commentary of Dr. Zacharias Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism* (trans. G.W. Williard; Cincinnati: T.P. Butcher, 1851), 490. Compare the two quotes provided above: Ursinus said "The lawe promiseth life to them that are iust & righteous in themselues, or with a condition of our owne righteousnesse, and perfect obedience performed by vs. Hee that doth them shall liue in them. If thou wilt enter into life, keepe the commandements." Beza said "The couenant of the lawe…is, *Do this and thou shalt live*: And. *If thou wilt enter into life, kepe the commaundementes*."

foedus naturale or *foedus creationis* closely aligned this covenant with a historical event, not just the moral law in general.

Ursinus' clear use of the law and the gospel dogmatically and historically is enhanced by his identification of the law as a covenant, and as a covenant present at creation. What naturally followed from Ursinus' identification of the moral law as containing the covenant of nature, was that this covenant was repeated (*repetivit et declaravit*) at Mt. Sinai in the Ten Commandments.[50] This means that the law and the gospel, dogmatically, were both present in the law and the gospel, historically. But in the time of the law, historically, the law, dogmatically, held a more prominent place, relatively speaking.

Caspar Olevianus

Caspar Olevianus (1536-1587), colleague of Ursinus, expanded the horizons of Reformed federalism in several ways.[51] But before discussing these forward movements, Olevianus' writings again show the law and the gospel in dogmatic and historical functions.

Olevianus said that "The law teaches sin to be *anomian*, that is, whatever is adverse to the law of God."[52] Elsewhere Olevianus defined the law as the immutable rule of righteousness, revealing the divine mind and demanding perfect internal and external obedience. Any lack of conformity to this law was condemned by the law unless a way of reconciliation was made (which the law did not provide).[53] The gospel, by contrast, offered a righteousness earned by Christ, one which was superior to a righteousness earned through the law.[54]

Olevianus saw this dogmatic contrast between the law and the gospel as a covenantal contrast. And here he took a large step forward. He drew this dogmatic distinction not just from the law in general contrasted with the gospel, but from the law of nature (*lex naturae*) and the written law (the Decalogue) as two covenants contrasted with the gospel.

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[50] Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 58.

[51] On Olevianus' covenant theology, see Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*; R. Scott Clark, *Caspar Olevian and the Substance of the Covenant* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2005); Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 421-441; Joshua N. Moon, *Jeremiah's New Covenant* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 104-110.

[52] Caspar Olevianus, *De Substantia Foedere Gratuiti Inter Deum et Electos* (Geneva: Eustache Vignon, 1585), 253. (II.10). "Docet autem lex peccatum esse anomian, id est, quicquid adversatur legi Dei."

[53] "Lex enim Dei est immutabilis regula iustitiae in mente divina, que perfectam internam & externam requirit obedientiam, & condemnat in omni rationali creatura quicquid ei non est conforme, nisi fiat reconciliatio." Olevianus, *In epistolam D. Pauli Apostoli ad Galatas notae* (Geneva: Eustache Vignon, 1578), 50-51.

[54] Olevianus, *De Substantiae*, 254-255 (II.13). "Ita evangelium offert Christum quo merito suo sit salvator tollens maledictionem, et efficacia quoque dum nimirum spiritu suo nos sibi uniendo intellectum nostrum illuminat, ut iustitiam sua obedientia nobis partam, quae longe omnem legis iustitiam superat."

He called these covenants the *foedus naturale* and the *foedus legale*. The law as a covenant was not new, but Olevianus' identification of two separate covenants built on the law was new. The *foedus naturale* (also *primus foedus*, *foedus creationis*, or *ius creationis*) was the result of man's condition created in the image of God and thus in perfect conformity with God's will.[55] It was not identical with the *lex naturae*, but rather was the result of man's created condition in the image of God relative to the *lex naturae*. In other words, while man remained upright according to the *lex naturae*, he remained in the *foedus naturale*.[56]

For Olevianus, the *foedus legale* was made with Israel and revived the *foedus naturale* made with Adam. However, whereas Olevianus did not connect a reward of eternal life to the *foedus naturale*, he explicitly did so in the *foedus legale*. Drawing from Galatians 4:24-26, Olevianus said that the law is a covenant that promises life upon condition of perfect obedience, cursing transgressors, and is to be distinguished from the free promise of the work of Christ to those who believe, which is the covenant of grace.[57] This is a dogmatic covenantal contrast, drawn between a legal covenant established in the time of Moses and the gospel covenant established in the time of Christ.

Key to appreciating Olevianus' contribution to covenant theology here is the fact that he attributed a subservient function to the *foedus legale*. Though it demanded perfect obedience and promised eternal life, man was unable to keep the law perfectly after the fall, and thus this covenant served to drive sinners to Christ.[58]

For Olevianus the law and the gospel represented two different covenantal ways of seeking righteousness before God, but the law was operative in two covenants, a natural covenant and a legal covenant. Man's natural relationship with God had been destroyed by Adam. And the legal covenant condemned anyone and everyone who would seek justification by its commands and promises. Thus the covenant of grace was God's way of escape for mankind.

Olevianus' sensitivity to the unique features of the *foedus legale* and his willingness to call it a covenant, and not just a historical administration of the covenant of grace, could

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[55] Olevianus, *De Substantiae*, 254.

[56] Bierma points out that several key elements of the later "covenant of works" are notably absent from Olevianus' *foedus naturale*. The positive laws of the garden are not mentioned, life is not promised, and Adam is not considered a federal head. We inherit his nature by birth, not imputation. Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 118-119.

[57] "Loquutus est de lege, quatenus est foedus promittens vitam sub conditione perfectae obedientiae & maledicens transgressoribus & eatenus distinguitur a promissione gratuita in Christo erga credentes, quae est foedus gratiae." Olevianus, *Galatas notae*, 98.

[58] Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 124. Cf. "Olevianus was not saying that the restatement of the obligations of the *foedus creationis* at Sinai was to provide a means of justification. He made it clear that while the law promised life for perfect obedience, it could not provide righteousness for those who had broken it. The function of the *foedus legale* was to serve the new covenant, the *foedus gratiae*." Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 429.

give the wrong impression that he considered the covenant of grace to begin only at the time of Christ's life and death. To the contrary, as with others in the Reformed tradition, Olevianus also spoke of the covenant of grace under different administrations. In fact, from the same passage, Galatians 4, Olevianus pointed out that the law, considered as the old covenant, or old administration of the covenant of grace, did indeed save sinners insofar as they looked to the promise or doctrine of Christ as it was then revealed.[59] This is a decidedly historical contrast, not a dogmatic contrast. "When Olevianus does use the terms 'old covenant' and 'new covenant,' then, what he usually has in mind are two 'dispensations' or 'economies' of this one covenant of grace."[60] Yet it must be clarified that the old covenant administration of the covenant of grace is not the *foedus legale*.[61]

While contributing to covenant theology in other ways, Olevianus' formulation of the *foedus legale* is the most important for this study.[62] Though this term had been used previously by Calvin to refer to the old administration of the covenant of grace, and though Musculus had seen fit to speak of three administrations rather than two because of the unique nature of the time of the law, and though Ursinus had connected the law to a *foedus naturale* and stated that the *foedus naturale* was repeated at Sinai, Olevianus considered the *foedus legale* to be a separate covenant. It primarily repeated the *foedus naturale*; it was not an administration of the *foedus gratiae*. The legal covenant and the covenant of grace thus ran side by side for a time, albeit with a subordinate function assigned to the legal covenant. Yet, the legal covenant was so closely related to the old covenant (i.e., administration) that circumcision functioned as "a sign of initiation into both the *foedus legale* ('the accidental' purpose of circumcision) and the *foedus gratiae* (the 'proper' purpose of circumcision)."[63]

In sum, a post-lapsarian covenant based on law, functionally subordinate to the covenant of grace, but temporally coordinate with its Old Testament administration is a

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[59] "Alioqui lex (quatenus comprehendit doctrinam de Christo) generavit, sed virtute promissionis in quam respiciebat, veros Dei filios dixit veterem pactionem." Olevianus, *Galatas notae*, 99. Furthermore, the time when the benefits were procured was not an obstacle to their reception. See Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 132-133.

[60] Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 131.

[61] Bierma comments in a footnote, "Occasionally, Olevianus uses the term *foedus vetus* synonymously with *foedus legale*….This represents only the assignment of different meanings to the same word in different contexts, however, and is not an attempt to identify through a common term the legal covenant with the Old Testament covenant of grace." Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 131. n. 138.

[62] Olevianus' other contributions include speaking of a pretemporal covenant between God the Father and God the Son, a covenant with the devil, and a covenant with creatures. Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 107-112, 120-122, 126-130.

[63] Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 153.

significant advance. Later federal theologians would develop similar models. Muller notes that "it is one of the more probable sources of [John] Cameron's views."[64]

It is also worth noting that Olevianus' treatment of the covenant of grace is generally more dogmatically than historically driven. Bierma states,

> Olevianus appeals to the covenant of grace not primarily to explain the continuity of salvation history in the two testaments…but to provide the believer with the (objective) certitude of salvation. The well-worn arguments for the unity of the testaments and infant baptism are conspicuously absent from his treatises on the covenant…One must turn to his commentaries, where he is compelled by certain biblical texts to treat them.[65]

Despite a difference of emphasis, Olevianus stands in direct continuity with the Reformed in their dogmatic distinction between the law and the gospel. He also stands in direct continuity in the distinction of the covenant of grace into two historical administrations. However, he diversified the tradition by expanding that dogmatic contrast in its covenantal form. It was not just between the law and the gospel, but the law and the gospel covenantally, and not just the law and the gospel covenantally, but the law in two covenants, the *foedus naturale* and the *foedus legale*.

Dudley Fenner

Dudley Fenner (c.1558-1587) is credited with the earliest use of the term *foedus operum*.[66] His contrast between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace aligns with the dogmatic distinction between the law and the gospel. In his *Sacra theologia* he stated that God's covenant is twofold, either of works or grace. In the *foedus operum*, the condition is perfect obedience. In the *foedus gratuitae promissionis*, the condition is receiving Christ.[67] Elsewhere he used the terms law and gospel to express the same ideas. He said, "The Law is a doctrine given of God, commanding…perfect obedience."[68] He added, "The law

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[64] Muller, "Divine Covenants," 20.

[65] Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 160.

[66] Fenner "evidences perhaps the earliest doctrinal use of the term." Muller, "Divine Covenants," 21. On Fenner, see Patrick Collinson, 'Fenner, Dudley (c.1558–1587)', *ODNB*. On Fenner's covenant theology see Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 442-460.

[67] Dudley Fenner, *Sacra theologia sive veritas quae est secundum pietatem ad unicae et verae methodi leges descripta* (London, 1585), 88. "Foedus duplex est…Operum foedus est foedus ubi conditio annexa est perfecta obedientia….Foedus gratuitae promissionis est foedus de Christo & *eulogia* in ipso extante, gratuitorum promissis, ubi conditio est, si recipeatur Christus."

[68] Fenner, *Certain Godly and Learned Treatises* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldegrave, 1592), 81.

hath two properties [cursing and blessing] giving to the perfect obedience of all, the favour of God to be felt with all blessing in soule & body for ever; called life."[69] By way of contrast, "One difference between the Law and the Gospell [is that the gospel], which to apprehend Christ, and so justification, &c. asketh but beleefe."

Like Olevianus, Fenner saw the covenant with the Jews as a covenant of works (*foedus operum*) in which God stated that they would be a special people above all others so long as they persevered in all the things written in the book of the law.[70] For Fenner, this was simply an application of his prior definition. If the covenant of works is a covenant conditioned on obedience, threatening the one who disobeys, and if God made a covenant with Israel upon condition of obedience, threatening punishment for disobedience, then it was a covenant of works. Also like Olevianus, Fenner ascribed a subservient function to the Mosaic covenant of works. Though the promise of life remained attached to the demands of the law, the impossibility of attaining it pushed sinners to Christ and the covenant of grace.[71]

Furthermore, again in a manner similar to Olevianus, the more common formula of one covenant under two administrations is not a prominent feature in Fenner's writing. His focus was more microscopic than a two-phase paradigm. Fenner spent a great deal of time describing the progressive form of government (*politeia*) that God instituted with his people in successive periods (i.e., after the fall, under Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, in Egypt, under Moses, etc.).[72] He treated the old and new covenants as the two sets of the books of the Bible in which Christ is first promised, then later clearly revealed.[73]

The trend already evident in Olevianus and Fenner is that while there was a solidification in the dogmatic contrast between the law and the gospel, now the covenants of works and grace, there was a diversification in the relation of these two "doctrines" or "covenants" to the unfolding of redemptive history.

Thomas Cartwright

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[69] Fenner, *Certain Godly and Learned Treatises*, 83. Fenner cites Leviticus 18:5 in support of this assertion, a key passage of Scripture for such questions.

[70] "Foedus cum Iudaeis ictum, est foedus operum, quo Deus stipulatur Iudaeos fore ipsi peculium prae omnibus populis, si permanserint in omnibus quae scripta sunt in libro legis." Fenner, *Sacra theologia*, 282.

[71] "The Lawe was given to the Iewes, and vs, not onely to bring vs vnto Christ, but also to allure and instruct vs to obedience when Christ is received." Fenner, *Certain Godly and Learned Treatises*, 89.

[72] Fenner, *Sacra theologia*, 117-ff., 222-241.

[73] Fenner, *Sacra theologia*, 251.

Thomas Cartwright (1534-1603) was a close associate of Fenner.[74] Following Fenner's terminology of the covenant of works and grace, he divided the word of God into two parts, "the doctrine or covenant of Workes, called the Law" and "[the doctrine or covenant of] Grace, called the Gospel."[75] Cartwright sums these up as "two waies of recovering happiness; the one by the workes of the Law, the other by faith in the promise of grace." He then proceeded to demonstrate that these two "waies" were mutually exclusive, and the inability of man to keep the law pushed him to seek reconciliation in the gospel.[76] Elsewhere he asked, "What doth the Law (containing the covenant of works) crave of us?" And he answered, "All such duties as were required of Adam in his innocencie, & all such, as are required since, by reason of his fall, with the reward of life everlasting to the doers of them, & curses to him that doth them not."[77] In Cartwright's thought, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace are two dogmatically distinguished covenants that offer a right-standing before God upon two different conditions.

Cartwright, like Olevianus and Fenner, spoke of two covenants of works, connected in identity by the law. In a manner of speaking, Cartwright wrote of one covenant of works, but its publication in two different times for two different ends. In discussing the covenant of works "*in general*" he made no distinction between two different covenants of works, as seen above. But in discussing the covenant of works "*in speciall*" he provided a more nuanced perspective.

The covenant of works is "summarily set downe" in the moral law. And thus it was given to Adam and written on his heart before the gospel was revealed. It is also "summarily contriued" in the Decalogue.[78] While Cartwright is not as clear as Fenner on the covenant of works being delivered again to Israel, he is clear on the equivalence of the moral law in its written form with the covenant of works.[79]

Nevertheless, it is significant that when Cartwright moved from the covenant of works to the covenant of grace, the biblical passage he quoted as a preface to his comments was Jeremiah 31:31-34, the classic contrast of the old and new covenants. The

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[74] On Cartwright see Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 442-460; Patrick Collinson, 'Cartwright, Thomas (1534/5–1603)', *ODNB*. Woolsey treats Fenner and Cartwright together.

[75] Thomas Cartwright, *A Treatise of the Christian Religion* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1616), 80. In another work Cartwright asks the same question, "What are the parts of the word?" And he answers, "The law & gracious promise; (otherwise called the covenant of workes, & the covenant of grace)." Cartwright, *A Methodicall Short Catechisme* (London: B.A., 1623), 5v.

[76] Cartwright, *A Treatise of the Christian Religion*, 81-82, 165.

[77] Cartwright, *A Methodicall Short Catechisme*, 5v.

[78] Cartwright, *A Treatise of the Christian Religion*, 74.

[79] "The republication of the law of nature was for Fenner, as well as for Cartwright, a reiteration of the covenant of works; its conditions and stipulations bound the Jewish people not only through the moral law, but also through the added rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic tradition." Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 452.

following set of questions is important for understanding Cartwright's view of the republished covenant of works as well as the covenant of grace,

> Q. What doth this Scripture call it [the covenant of grace]?
> A. A new covenant.
> Q. Why is it called a new covenant?
> A. Because it succeedeth the former covenant, and was made upon the breach thereof. (Heb. 8.13)
> Q. Doth then the making of this covenant disable the former?
> A. Yea, for the latter Covenant had not been made, if the former had not bin broken, & so become insufficient. And therefore they are convinced of impiety by the very making of this covenant, who seek justification by the old covenant. (Heb. 8.7. Rom. 3.23. Galat. 3.21)
> Q. What is this new Covenant?
> A. A free contract or Covenant betweene God and a sinner, concerning the pardon of sinne, and life everlasting, through faith in Christ Iesus.
> Q. When did this Covenant begin?
> A. Immediately after the Fall. (Gen. 3.15)[80]

Cartwright used Jeremiah 31 to identify a dogmatic contrast between the old and new covenants. The old covenant was a postlapsarian covenant of works, unprofitable unto life (as already explained at the end of his discussion of the covenant of works), "breached," "insufficient," and thus "disabled."[81] It was always meant to point sinners to Christ, and thereby be subservient to the covenant of grace. It was "impious" to seek justification by it. The new covenant of Jeremiah 31 was the covenant of grace which had been operative in history since the fall of man and its revelation in Genesis 3:15. The old covenant was not an older administration of that same covenant. It was a different covenant. Thus, Cartwright represents development along the lines of Olevianus and Fenner.[82]

However, unlike Fenner, Cartwright is quite explicit in his use of the more common description of the covenant of grace, historically considered. After contrasting the new covenant with the old, he asked "Of how many sorts is this Covenant?" And he answered "In substance it is but one; but in regard of circumstance it is two: the Old Testament, and

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[80] Cartwright, *A Treatise of the Christian Religion*, 167.

[81] "Although [the covenant of works] bee not able to reconcile vs, yet it maketh way to reconciliation by another Covenant." Cartwright, *A Treatise of the Christian Religion*, 165.

[82] Cartwright spent time at Heidelberg under Olevianus. Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 179.

the New."[83] He defined the Old Testament as "the covenant of God, which (vnder types, figures, and shadowes) did set forth Christ before his comming in the flesh; and by vertue whereof life everlasting was given by faith in Christ that was to come." And he defined the New Testament as "the covenant of God, which (since the comming of Christ in the flesh) hath abolished those shadowes, & giueth life everlasting by faith in Christ, that is come; by meanes whereof it is in a special respect called the Gospell."[84] It is significant that Cartwright uses the term "Old Testament" in distinction from "old covenant." By using the term "Old Testament" Cartwright was identifying the pre-incarnation phase of the covenant of grace which had been revealed in Genesis 3:15. This is distinct from his use of the term "old covenant" to describe the covenant of works delivered through Moses in the Decalogue. The "new vs. old covenant" contrast is dogmatic. The "New vs. Old Testament" contrast is historical.

William Perkins

William Perkins (1558-1602), fellow at Christ's College, Cambridge from 1584-1595, influenced many Reformed thinkers through his writings and his work as a professor.[85] Covenant theology played an important part in his theological system, and in this area Perkins followed the theology already presented in this research.

Perkins' discussion of the covenant appears under the heading of "The Outward Meanes of executing the decree of election, and of the Decalogue." He distinguished the covenant into "two kindes…The covenant of workes, & the covenant of grace."[86] Perkins immediately cited Jeremiah 31:31-33 in full before proceeding to describe the covenant of works. This is significant because Perkins drew a dogmatic contrast from this passage. They may be two species of covenant, but they are not two phases of one specific covenant.

For Perkins, the covenant of works was "Gods covenant made with condition of perfect obedience, and is expressed in the moral law….The Decalogue or ten Commandements, is an abridgement of the whole Law, and the covenant of workes."[87] This covenant continued to command and condemn after the fall. After expounding the Decalogue, Perkins discussed the use of the law and stated that it "provoked to seeke…Christ Iesus."[88] Dogmatically opposed to this, the covenant of grace "is that

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[83] Cartwright, *A Treatise of the Christian Religion*, 168.

[84] Ibid.

[85] On Perkins, see Michael Jinkins, 'Perkins, William (1558–1602)', *ODNB*. On Perkins' covenant theology see Woolsey, *Unity and* Continuity, 461-498.

[86] William Perkins, *A Golden Chaine, Or the Description of Theologie* (Cambridge: John Legat, 1600), 36.

[87] Perkins, *Golden Chaine*, 36-37.

[88] Perkins, *Golden Chaine*, 102.

whereby God freely promising Christ, and his benefits, exacteth againe of man, that he would by faith receiue Christ, and repent of his sinnes."[89]

Soon after, Perkins explained the unity of the covenant and the diversity of its administration. "The covenant albeit, it be one in substance, yet it is distinguished into the old and new testament. The olde testament or covenant is that, which in types and shadowes pre-figured Christ to come, and to be exhibited. The newe testament declareth Christ already come in the flesh, and is apparantly shewed in the Gospel."[90] His discussion of the sacraments is indicative of his meaning. Circumcision and the Passover had the same significance as Baptism and the Lord's Supper.[91]

Perkins' relatively brief comments on the covenants, dogmatically and historically, in *A Golden Chaine* are bolstered by his exegetical work in his commentary on Galatians, particularly Galatians 4:24. Perkins commented, "The two Testaments are the Covenant of workes, and the Covenant of grace, one promising life eternall to him that doth all things contained in the law: the other to him that turns and beleeves in Christ." He continues, "It must be observed, that Paul saith, *they are two*, that is, two in substance, or kind. And they are two, sundrie waies."[92]

Perkins' drew from Paul's contrast a dogmatic distinction between the law and the gospel or the covenants of works and grace, terms he used interchangeably and equally. What is difficult to reconcile, however, is that Perkins used historical markers to distinguish the covenants of works and grace, in substance. Perkins identified the covenant of works with the Ten Commandments as written in stone, Moses as the Mediator of this law, and the dedication of the law by the blood of beasts.[93] In one case, then, Perkins declared the old and new testaments to be one in substance, and in another case he declared them to be two in substance.[94] Given Perkins' equivalence of the law and the covenant of works, the best explanation of his model would be to say that for a time a republished covenant of works operated subordinately but concurrently with the covenant of grace.[95] The difficulty is that Perkins applies the name "old testament" to

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[89] Ibid.

[90] Perkins, *Golden Chaine*, 103.

[91] Perkins, *Golden Chaine*, 104-113.

[92] Perkins, *A Commentarie or Exposition, upon the first five chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians* (Cambridge: John Legat, 1604), 347.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Perkins repeated, "The two Testaments the law and the Gospel, are two in nature, substance, or kind." Perkins, *Galatians*, 348.

[95] Cf. Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 177. Here Bierma argues that Perkins' thought seems influenced by Olevianus. He states, "The *foedus gratuitum* and the *foedus legale* are separate but concurrent covenants." Later he claims, "The parallels, then, between Perkins's and Olevianus's covenant theologies are almost too uncanny to be coincidental." Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus*, 179.

both the substantially unified pre-messianic phase of the covenant of grace, and to the substantially distinct Mosaic covenant.

Perkins taught the dogmatic distinction of the law and the gospel, expressed as the covenants of works and grace. And he was standard in his description of the unity of the testaments of the covenant of grace. But like Olevianus, Fenner, and Cartwright, Perkins considered the law written in stone, delivered by Moses, and confirmed by animal-blood, to be the covenant of works.

Amandus Polanus

The covenant theology of Amandus Polanus (1561-1610) closely resembles Perkins. Dogmatically, he stated, "The heavenly doctrine…is twofold, the law and the Gospell. The law of God is a doctrine, which…commandeth vs what we must doe…requiring perfect obedience…and promising eternall life to those that obey it."[96] He adds, "The Gospell is that wholesome doctrine concerning Christ, already shewed and manifested."[97]

Later in the same work he expanded on these ideas. He said,

> The spirituall covenant, is that in which God promiseth vnto men, spirituall good things, namely immortalitie and eternall life. And that is twofold, the covenant of works, or the covenant of grace. The covenant of works, is that, in which God promiseth everlasting life unto a man that in all respects performeth perfect obedience to the law of works, adding thereunto the threatning of eternall death if he shall not performe perfect obedience. God made this covenant in the beginning with the first men Adam and Hevah, whilest they were in the state of their first integritie, Genes. 2.17.[98]

Polanus' definitions of the law and the covenant of works are identical. With greater clarity than Perkins, however, Polanus stated that God remade this covenant with Israel. "The same covenant did God repeat and make againe by Moses with the people of Israell….That he might thrust us forward to seeke to be restored in the covenant of

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[96] Amandus Polanus, *The Substance of Christian Religion* (London: Arn Hatfield, 1600), 105-106. This is a condensed English version of Polanus' *Syntagmatis Theologiae Christianae*. Polanus uses "heavenly" doctrine in distinction from "bodily" benefits given by God as in the Noahic covenant. "The bodily covenant is a covenant, in which God promiseth men corporall good things. Of this sort was the covenant which God made with Noah." Amandus Polanus, *The Substance of Christian Religion*, 288.

[97] Polanus, *The Substance of Christian Religion*, 119.

[98] Polanus, *The Substance of Christian Religion*, 184-185.

grace."[99] This is another example of a subordinate republication of the covenant of works through Moses, concurrent with the covenant of grace.

Polanus defined the covenant of grace as "a free promise, by which God promiseth us, that he will become our God, and that without all merit and desert of ours, even for Christ our Lords sake onely."[100] He is quite clear on the dogmatic distinction between the covenant of works and grace, or the law and the gospel, including a dogmatic difference between the Mosaic covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

Later he employed the common view of the covenant of grace. He said,

> That eternall covenant…is alwaies one if you respect the substance of it. But as in regard of the administration of it, it is either old or new. Old, as it was the reconciliation of the old people with God, through Christ that was to be given. New, as it is the reconciliation of the newe people, with God thorow Christ, now already giuen and exhibited in the flesh.[101]

Salvation was one and the same throughout history, passing through a pre-incarnation and post-incarnation phase, or two administrations.

Robert Rollock

Robert Rollock (1555-1599) brought together several strands of thinking in Reformed covenant theology.[102] As with all other Reformed theologians, for Rollock the law and the gospel are two ways of seeking perfect righteousness. He said, "The whole doctrine of the Law may be reduced to this…Cursed is he that continueth not in all things which are written in the booke of this law, to do them." In contrast to the law, "The doctrine of the Gospell may be comprehended in this forme: Whoseoever beleeveth, shall be iustified and live."[103] Elsewhere he equated the law and the gospel with the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. He said, "The covenant of God generally is a promise, under some one certaine condition. And it is twofold: the first is the covenant of works; the second is the covenant of grace."[104]

When speaking of the law and the covenant of works, Rollock employed several of the terms used by Reformed writers before him. He said, "The covenant of workes, which

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[99] Polanus, *The Substance of Christian Religion*, 185.

[100] Polanus, *The Substance of Christian Religion*, 186.

[101] Polanus, *The Substance of Christian Religion*, 282-283.

[102] On Rollock, see James Kirk, 'Rollock, Robert (1555–1599)', *ODNB*. A helpful survey of Rollock's covenant theology is found in Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 512-539.

[103] Rollock, *A Treatise of Gods Effectual Calling* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1603), 178.

[104] Rollock, *A Treatise of Gods Effectual Calling*, 6.

may also be called a legall or natural covenant, is founded in nature…and in the law of God….For…he made a covenant with man, wherein he promised him eternall life under condition of holy and good workes."[105] In contrast to the covenant of works, "In the free covenant of grace, or the Gospel, the first grounde is our mediator Iesus Christ…the vertue whereof is twofold: The first serves to satisfie the iustice and wrath of God for our sinnes….The second is, to purchase and merit a new grace & mercie of God for us."[106] Later Rollock spoke of faith as the condition of this covenant, being provided by the covenant itself. This aligns with his previous summary of the gospel as "Whoseoever beleeveth, shall be iustified and live."

For Rollock, the law and the gospel were two dogmatically distinguished covenants, the covenants of works and grace. He said, "*Paul* Galath. 4.24. expresselie sets down two covenants, which in the olde Testament, were shadowed by two women, as by types, to wit, *Hagar* the handmaide, and *Sarah* the freewoman: for saith he, *these be those two covenants*."[107] As seen here, Rollock understood the law given by Moses to be a republication of the covenant of works. He said, "For this cause, when he was to repeat that covenant of workes to the people of Israel, he first gave the law written in tables of stone: then he made a covenant with his people, saying; *Doe these things, and ye shall live*."[108] This postlapsarian covenant of works "hath the same use in the unregenerate, elect and reprobate, to wit, to iustifie and save them, or to condemne them….And for as much as it can not iustifie them because of their corruption, Rom. 8.3. it followeth that it must necessarilie condemne them."[109] Thus it was subordinate to and concurrent with the covenant of grace.

Historically, Rollock identified the old and new testaments as two administrations of the one covenant of grace, though this does not feature prominently in his *Treatise of Effectual Calling*. The substance is the same in both, but the difference lay in the accidents.[110] His comments on the name "Old Testament" are intriguing. When asking what is meant by the "Old Testament" Rollock explained that it is not the legal covenant (*foedus legale*) alone, nor the covenant of grace (*foedus gratiae*) alone, but the covenant of

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[105] Rollock, *A Treatise of Gods Effectual Calling*, 6-7.

[106] Rollock, *A Treatise of Gods Effectual Calling*, 11-12.

[107] Rollock, *A Treatise of Gods Effectual Calling*, 6. See also Rollock, *Analysis logica in epistolam Pauli Apostoli ad Galatas* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1602), 86-93.

[108] Rollock, *A Treatise of Gods Effectual Calling*, 7. "Rollock's teaching on the legal and evangelical covenants clearly followed the pattern of Perkins." Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 516.

[109] Rollock, *A Treatise of Gods Effectual Calling*, 21.

[110] "Idem re & substantia es utrumque, diversum vero est accidente: ex qua diversitate accidentali, illud vetus foedus sive testamentum, hoc vero novum foedus sive testamentum est vocatum. Heb 8:8." Rollock, *Quaestiones et Responsiones Aliquot de Foedere Dei* (Edinburgh: Henricus Charteris, 1596), B5, col. 2.

grace with the legal covenant adjoined to it.[111] In this arrangement the gospel was proclaimed more obscurely, and the repetition of the legal covenant created enmity between God and the people. This in turn caused them to look for reconciliation with God through the gospel, or the covenant of grace.

John Cameron

John Cameron (c.1579-1625) is the most important author included in this survey.[112] In 1608 at Heidelberg he defended *De triplici Dei cum homine foedere theses*, theses concerning the threefold covenant of God with man. Here he discussed the *vetus foedus sive foedus subserviens*, the old covenant or the subservient covenant.[113] Previous authors had distinguished the old covenant from the covenant of grace and assigned a subservient function to it. But such authors were still working within the twofold *foedus operum* and *foedus gratiae* dichotomy (usually based on exegesis of Galatians 4:24). Cameron stepped beyond this model by positing that God's covenant is threefold, and that the old covenant was neither the covenant of works, nor the covenant of grace, but a separate legal and subservient covenant.

Cameron's theses were not immediately about three different covenants. Rather, they begin by distinguishing between the absolute covenant (*foedus absolutum*) and the

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[111] Commenting on Hebrews 8:6 Rollock says "Hic observa mentionem fieri duorum foederum: veteris & novi. Veteris foederis nomine, non foedus legale tantum, quod conditionem habuit operum legalium, neque; gratuitum tantum, quod cum foedere legali obscure propositum fuit, verum nomine veteris foederis intelligo utrumque & legale, & gratuitum; Legale cujus expressa mentio facta est: gratuitum cujus non nisi obscure meminit vetus Scriptura. Quod autem veteris foederis nomine utrumque; & legale, & gratuitum, accipiendum sit vel ex eo apparet, quod hoc loco veteri foederi tribuat intercessores…Est quidem etiam foederis legalis: quia in repetendo foedere legali inimicitiae erant inter Deum & populum: ubi autem inimicitiae ibi intercessione opus est." Rollock, *Analysis Logica in Epistolam ad Hebraeos* (Edinburgh, 1605), 105. The same argument is made in Rollock, *Quaestiones*, B5, col. 2-B6, col. 1. "An veteris testamenti nomine intelligis foedus gratiæ? Veteris testamenti nomen latius patet ad legem sive fœdus operum pariter & fœdus gratiæ cum lege coniunctum. sic accipiendum docet veteris testamenti nomen. Heb. 8&9. Ergo etiam fœdus gratiæ cum veteri illo populo percussum vocatur vetus testamentum? Ita est."

[112] On Cameron, see L. W. B. Brockliss, 'Cameron, John (1579/80–1625)', *ODNB*. On Cameron's covenant theology see Muller, "Divine Covenants."

[113] John Cameron, *De triplici Dei cum homine foedere theses* (Heidelberg, 1608), also in *Joh. Cameronis S. Theologiae in academia Salmuriansis nuper Professoris, Praelectionum in selectoria quaedam N. T. loca Salmuri habitarum*, 3 vols. (Saumur, 1626-1628), III, 609-630; and in translation, *Certain Theses, or, Positions of the learned John Cameron, Concerning the Three-fold Covenant of God with Man*, trans. Samuel Bolton, in *The True Bounds of Christian Freedome* (London: J. L., 1645), 353-401.

hypothetical covenant (*foedus hypotheticum*).[114] The absolute covenant is merely a promise, what God will do. It does not require restipulation on man's part, as in the covenant with Noah and God's promise not to destroy the earth.[115] This also included God's absolute covenant with the elect.[116] It was absolute or unconditional in the sense that it depended purely on God's promised actions.[117]

The hypothetical covenant, in contrast, included both God's stipulation and man's restipulation. It was in a threefold distinction of the hypothetical covenant that Cameron discussed the covenant of nature (*foedus naturae*), the subservient covenant (*foedus subserviens*), and the covenant of grace (*foedus gratiae*). This means that Cameron actually discusses at least five covenants.[118]

Cameron began his discussion of the threefold covenant by distinguishing the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace. Though not employing the terms law and gospel specifically, and though not using the term "covenant of works," his view was substantially the same as the dogmatic distinction common to all Reformed thought. This is clear where Cameron elaborated on the similarities and dissimilarities between these covenants, contrasting them along the lines of justice and faith. The covenant of nature rewards one according to his due. The covenant of grace gives freely to the one who receives.[119]

One of the key features of his discussion of the covenant of grace is his distinction between the covenant promised (*promissum*) and promulgated (*promulgatum et sancitum*). This deserves greater attention because it is this distinction that later opponents of the Particular Baptists saw operative in their covenant theology.[120]

This distinction is very similar to the historical distinction of the covenant of grace into two administrations, the old and the new.[121] The promised/promulgated distinction was based on the fact that the covenant of grace depended upon a mediator's work. Because that mediator's work was not actually accomplished until long after the covenant

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[114] Cameron's initial distinction between the absolute and hypothetical covenants is another unique feature of his thinking. Musculus had spoken of a general and special covenant, and Polanus had spoken of earthly and heavenly covenants, but Cameron went his own way here. Muller, "Divine Covenants," 30.

[115] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 353-355.

[116] Olevianus had already spoken of a pretemporal covenant concerning the elect, and many other writers had treated the covenant as the outward means of God's effecting his decree of election. Cameron's view here moves toward what would later be called the covenant of redemption.

[117] Cameron grounds this in God's antecedent love as opposed to his consequent love. It is not contingent on anything that has been performed or will be performed by the creature.

[118] Muller, "Divine Covenants," 28.

[119] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 357-358.

[120] See Chapter 2, especially Christopher Blackwood.

[121] Cameron does use the terms Old and New Testaments in passing later in the work. Cf. Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 387.

was announced, the covenant was not fully established and sanctioned until Christ's death. Up until the time of its promulgation it was merely promised and declared, as Cameron noted, to Adam, the patriarchs, and the people under Moses.[122]

Cameron proceeded to explain the covenant of grace promised, demonstrating that Christ's mediatory work and benefits were the same to all those who believed, though the clarity of revelation was considerably darker than when the covenant was promulgated.[123]

Cameron was so sensitive to the progressive clarity and revelation of the covenant of grace that he identified five steps or degrees: before the law, from the law to the prophets, from the prophets to John the Baptist, from John the Baptist to Christ, and its full execution and promulgation in Christ.[124] Cameron then further explained the time when Christ came to promulgate the covenant, distinguishing the clarity of his work into the time when Christ was executing "the counsel of the Father," and after he had executed it. The time after was then subdivided into the time when the Apostles were taught after the resurrection, and the spread of their message after the ascension. Cameron identified the full and final promulgation of the new covenant, then, to be Pentecost.[125]

When he arrived at the covenant of grace promulgated he called it "the gospel, or new covenant."[126] In fact, the difference between the revelation of the covenant of grace promised and promulgated was so significant that the pre-incarnate promises of Christ could "not properly be called *Gospel*" due to the disparity in clarity and the burden of the law imposed during that time.[127]

After explaining the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace, Cameron described the old covenant or subservient covenant (*vetus foedus sive foedus subserviens*). He defined it as "that, which God *entred* into with the people of Israel in the *mount Sinai*, that he might prepare them for faith, and that he might enflame them with a desire of the promise, and of the *Gospel-covenant*."[128] The old covenant is so called because it is intended to "give place to a better Covenant."[129]

In comparing the covenant of nature and the subservient covenant, Cameron noted that they contained the same stipulation, obedience to the moral law. But the subservient

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[122] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 365. "Foedus Gratiae vel consideratur ut promissum, vel ut promulgatum & sancitum. Promissum est Patribus, a primum Adamo, de in Patriarchis, denique populo Israelitico: Promulgatum vero postquam venisset; am plenitudo illa temporum."

[123] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 366-377.

[124] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 369.

[125] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 369-370, 379.

[126] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 378.

[127] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 379.

[128] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 381.

[129] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 382. Cameron cites Hebrews 8:13 here.

covenant promised a blessed life in Canaan, not paradise. Furthermore, the subservient covenant obligated Israel, not Adam, to a much larger set of laws, the civil, and ceremonial laws.[130] One of the most important differences between the subservient covenant and the covenant of nature is that the "proper scope" of the subservient covenant is "to lead us unto Christ," whereas this is only a secondary and "accidental" feature of the covenant of nature.[131] This is clear from the very definition of the subservient covenant. It was designed to prepare the people for faith. The ground of the subservient covenant was the election of the people of Israel, their redemption from Egypt, and their preservation in Canaan.[132]

These differences mark out some of Cameron's unique contributions to covenant theology. The precise details were not new, but it was unique to conclude that a third covenant, other than the covenants of works or grace, was constituted.[133]

Like Olevianus and those who considered the *foedus legale* to be a covenant distinct from the covenant of grace, Cameron drew a dogmatic contrast between the subservient covenant and the covenant of grace. The condition of the subservient covenant was "Doe this and live." The condition of the covenant of grace is "Beleeve, and thou shalt not come into iudgement."[134] In the failing to keep the subservient covenant, sinners were pointed to Christ. Cameron stated that "the *old* Covenant was the *meane* unto, the *end*; but the *Covenant* of Grace the *end it selfe*."[135]

Another key feature of Cameron's thought is his discussion of typology. The old covenant pointed sinners to Christ not just negatively, but positively "as being a *Type*, and a *similitude* of the *new* Covenant."[136] The Israelites that lived under the subservient covenant were not simply instructed that they were sinners, but furthermore they were instructed about forgiveness and deliverance.

This was not new. But Cameron teased out the details more than others before him by describing typology on two levels. Most Reformed writers would discuss the sacraments under the idea of the two administrations of the covenant of grace. Circumcision and baptism or the Passover and the Lord's Supper were simply two different external forms of the same thing. The substance was the same; the accidental administration was diverse.

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[130] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 383.

[131] Ibid.

[132] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 384.

[133] One is reminded here of Bullinger's comments that "it may bee easilie observed, that the law appointing out a certaine land peculiarlie separated from other nations, did promise to the old fathers the possession of the same, so long as they did keepe the law: but if they did transgresse the law, then did it threaten that they should be rotted up, & utterly cast out of that good land."

[134] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 393.

[135] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 394.

[136] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 395.

The difference could be analogized as two sets of clothing for one person, or two sets of utensils used to eat the same food.

Cameron, however, treated the relationship between type and antitype with greater nuance. He said, "The *Sacraments*, *Sacrifices*, and *Ceremonies* of the *Old* Testament did set forth Christ, and the *benefits* by Christ; not *primarily*, but *secondarily*, and that too, but *darkly*; but the *Sacraments* of the *New* Covenant do shew forth Christ *primarily*, and that *clearely*."[137] Insofar as Old Testament Israelites looked past the types to the antitypes, they were partakers of salvific benefits, while at the same time enjoying the earthly benefits. For example,

> *Circumcision*, *primarily*, did separate betweene the *seede* of *Abraham* and the *rest* of the *Nations*; it did *seale* unto them the *earthly* promise: *secondarily*, it did signifie out *sanctification*. In like manner the *Passeover*, *primarily*, the *passing over of the destroying Angel*; *secondarily*, Christ: so also the *sacrifices*, and the *cleansings*, they represented, *primarily*, a certaine *carnall holinesse*: *secondarily*, they figured out *Christ*, and the *benefits* of the *New* Covenant.[138]

This was a rather delicate move on Cameron's part. One of the polemical forces behind distinguishing the law and the gospel dogmatically and historically was to counteract the Roman Catholic view that the gospel was just a new law, or the continental Anabaptists' view that the Israelites only enjoyed earthly benefits. By positing a dogmatic distinction between law and gospel, i.e., a difference in substance, the Reformed preserved justification by faith alone. However, by describing a historical distinction between two phases of the covenant of grace, i.e., a difference of accidents, the Reformed preserved the continuity of justification by faith throughout history. William Bucanus (d.1603) asked and answered, "What opinions are against this doctrine? The errour of Servetus and certaine Anabaptists, who faine that the people of Israel was fatted and pampered in this life, without any hope of heavenly immortalitie."[139]

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[137] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 399.

[138] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 400.

[139] William Bucanus, *A Body of Divinity* (trans. Robert Hill; London: Daniel Pakeman, 1659), 253. George Walker makes a similar statement: "Let this enflame our hearts with a deadly hatred and detestation of all those heretickes, and their doctrine, as the Manicheans, Anabaptists, Antinomians, blasphemous Servetus, and the rest who have not been ashamed to teach…that the fathers did never partake of saving grace in Christ, neither were under the same covenant of life with us; but onely were fed with temporall promises, and earthly blessings, as hoggs and calves for the slaughter." George Walker, *The Manifold Wisedome of God* (London: R.H., 1641), 124. Bucanus and Walker are referring to the statements of the Anabaptists at the Frankenthal Colloquy in 1571. Cf. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992-96), 2:193.

Cameron was able to distinguish the earthly benefits of the subservient covenant from the spiritual benefits of the new covenant in substance and yet connect them at the same time in history, all through carefully nuanced typology. The Israelites' earthly benefits were indeed earthly benefits, but they were never designed to be disconnected in typological meaning from the benefits of salvation in Christ. Indeed, the entire covenant was subservient to the covenant of grace, and its "proper scope" was to reveal Christ.

This is a significant contextual element for the Particular Baptists because they employed nearly the same arguments and hermeneutics. In fact, these very portions of Cameron's thought came into debate.[140] But the Particular Baptists were dismissed quickly under the false pretense that they were simply reproducing the Anabaptist arguments of a radical and absolute dichotomy between earthly and spiritual benefits.

In a survey of unity and diversity among Reformed writers based on their use of the law-gospel contrast dogmatically and historically, Cameron's continuity and discontinuity with the tradition that preceded him stands out. There is no doubt that regarding justification by faith, as contradistinguished from seeking righteousness by works, Cameron lined up with the Reformed writers. In fact, his elaboration of the covenant of nature is identical in doctrine with the more common terminology of the covenant of works. Dogmatically, Cameron was no different from any writer presented in this research.

Historically, however, Cameron demonstrated a hermeneutical sensitivity perhaps unrivaled up to his time. Where some saw three administrations, and where others saw a contextually republished covenant of works, Cameron saw the *foedus subserviens*. While very similar to the subordinate but concurrent *foedus legale* of Olevianus, Perkins, Rollock, and others, this set John Cameron apart as a key author in Reformed covenant theology.

When compared with Musculus' three administrations, Olevianus' subordinate *foedus legale*, and the theologians that followed Olevianus, Cameron's step forward is a relatively small one.[141] One indicator of the influence of his insights is that Samuel Bolton (1606-1654) saw fit to translate his theses, republish them, and comment:

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[140] See chapter 2.

[141] As Muller notes, "Cameron's threefold covenant definition…actually belongs to one of the major trajectories of developing Reformed covenantal thought." Muller adds later, "Cameron, in fact, is building quite positively on the work of his predecessors." Muller, "Divine Covenants," 15, 33. Lucas Trelcatius (1573-1607) expressed a view similar to Musculus. Regarding the historical administration of the covenant of grace, Trelcatius first divided it into two periods: before Christ and after Christ. But he subdivided the period before Christ into three epochs: from Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to Christ. Within this "Testament" Trelcatius identified two parts, one subordinate to the other: "The one *Legall* and conditionall, requiring of man a perfect obedience of the law, and under condition thereof, promising life eternall…but the other part of that Testament, was the Doctrine *Evangelicall*, concerning mans reconciliation with God." Elsewhere he delineated three "principall times": before the law, under the law, and after the law. He explained that "they make not three covenants, but onely a three-fold manner of

> It is the Key to the Gospel, and the best resolver that I have ever met with all of those intricate controversies, and disputes concerning the law; wee read often in Scripture that the Law was a Covenant, and more frequently among Divines, that we are free from the Law as a Covenant, but to tell us what Covenant this was, hath not been the worke of many.[142]

Some disagreed with Bolton's assessment. Cameron's work received a mixed reception throughout the seventeenth century, but his views were not a departure from Reformed covenant theology.[143] The various responses to Cameron's covenantal thought highlight his importance in measuring the diversity of Reformed federalism.

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administring one Covenant." Lucas Trelcatius, *A Briefe Institution of the Common Places of Sacred Divinitie* (trans. Iohn Gawen; London: Imprinted by T.P., 1610), 281-281, 290. Johannes Wollebius (1589-1629) also distinguished three time periods within the Old Testament administration: Adam to Abraham, Abraham to Moses, and Moses to Christ. Johannes Wollebius, *The Abridgment of Christian Divinitie* (trans. Alexander Ross; London: T. Mabb, 1660), 172.

[142] Bolton, *The True Bounds*, 351.

[143] Thomas Cobbet, Samuel Rutherford, Francis Roberts, William Bridge, Patrick Gillespie, Francis Turretin, and James Rossington rejected the subservient covenant. Cf. Thomas Cobbet, *A Just Vindication of the Covenant and Church-Estate of Children of Church-Members* (London: R. Cotes, 1648), 64-66, 76; Samuel Rutherford, *The Covenant of Life Opened: Or, A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* (Edinburgh: Andro Anderson, 1654), 57-65; Francis Roberts, *Mysterium & Medulla Bibliorum. The Mysterie and Marrow of the Bible: Viz. God's Covenants With Man* (London: R.W., 1657), 748-753; William Bridge, *Christ and the Covenant* (London: N. Ranew, 1667), 65; Patrick Gillespie, *The Ark of the Testament* Opened (London: R.C., 1661), 153-156; Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:262-269. James Rossington, *Infant-Baptism; Or, Infant-Sprinkling; (As the Anabaptists Ironically term it,) Asserted and maintained by the Scriptures, and Authorities of the Primitive Fathers* (London: J. Taylor, 1700), 54. John Flavel acknowledged Cameron's view to be different from most others. Cf. *Planelogia. A Succinct and Seasonable Discourse of the Occasions, Causes, Nature, Rise, Growth, and Remedies of Mental Errors* (London: R. Roberts, 1691), 185. Jeremiah Burroughs held a position similar to Cameron's, teaching that the covenant made through Moses was "a temporal Covenant annexed unto [the covenant of grace], that concernd their living prosperously in the Land of *Canaan*." Cf. Jeremiah Burroughs, *Gospel-Conversation: Wherein is shewed, How the Conversation of Believers must be above what could be by the Light of Nature, beyond those that lived under the Law, and suitable to what Truths the Gospel holds forth* (London: Peter Cole, 1648), 43-49. Thomas Goodwin also approved of Cameron's subservient covenant. Goodwin said that the covenant established in Exodus 20, dedicated with animal blood, and summed up in the phrase "Do this and live," "was *fœdus subserviens* to the gospel (as learned Cameron calls it)…." Cf. Thomas Goodwin, *The Works of Thomas Goodwin, D.D.*, 12 vols. (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1863), 6:354. Edward Leigh used Cameron's explanation of the differences between the covenants of works and grace, as well as the distinction of the covenant of grace into its promised and promulgated eras. Cf. Edward Leigh, *A Treatise of the Divine Promises* (London: A. Miller, 1657), 94-95. John Humfrey listed Cameron's view as one among others regarding the Mosaic covenant. Cf. John Humfrey, *The Middle-Way In One paper of The Covenants, Law and Gospel*. London: T. Parkhurst, 1674), 14. Humfrey himself stated that the Mosaic covenant was "a kind of Political Covenant made with the Nation of the *Jews*." On Humfrey, see also chapter four. George

William Ames

William Ames (1576-1633) was a student of Perkins and a professor at Cambridge from 1601-1610. Ames' writings and teaching had a great impact on Reformed theology, particularly in England and Holland.[144] As an inheritor of Perkins' intellectual heritage, Ames closely followed the developments of the Reformed tradition.

For Ames, the old and new covenants were two dogmatically distinguished covenants of righteousness. While tending to favor terms other than "covenant of works" and "covenant of grace," Ames clearly held to the standard Reformed position. Ames spoke of "the Law and covenant of God with man in the *Creation*." This covenant "was, *Doe this, and thou shalt live*: If thou doe it not, thou shalt dye the death." Attached to the command "there was contained a promise, of continuing animall life, and of exalting it afterward to spirituall, as also a threatning of bodily death."[145] When God dealt with Adam, he gave him the law, "not only as one private person…but also as a publique person, or the head of mans nature."[146]

In contrast to this covenant of law, "The way of application whereby God doth with greatest firmnesse performe that, which was contained in a covenant formerly made, and broken, is called in the Scriptures a new covenant, *Hebr*. 8.8.10. A covenant of life, salvation, and grace…which in the same sence also is called the Gospell."[147] The law and the gospel are two covenants.

Ames is quite clear on their mutual exclusivity. They are two different things. "This new covenant differs from the old…in the kind, for that was as it were a covenant of friendship betweene the Creator and the creature: but this is a covenant of reconciliation

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Walker's work on covenant theology follows a similar style to Cameron in method and terminology. Walker discussed the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace, but whereas Cameron saw the old covenant as a separate subservient covenant, Walker considered it a mixture of the covenants of nature and grace. Cf. Walker, *The Manifold Wisedome of God*.

[144] On Ames, see Jan van Vliet, *The Rise of Reformed System: The Intellectual Heritage of William Ames* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013); Keith L. Sprunger, 'Ames, William (1576–1633)', *ODNB*.

[145] William Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity* (London: Edward Griffin, 1642), 55.

[146] Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, 54.

[147] Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, 113. Ames demonstrates early features of what would later be known as the covenant of redemption. For Ames, the application of Christ's work was founded on "the decree, and donation of the Father" of "some certaine men to Christ to be redeemed." It was also founded on the work of Christ and the Father's acceptance of that work. God the Father promised a reward to the Son based on a condition. The Son, having fulfilled the condition, and the Father having accepted his fulfillment, bestows the promised blessings. William Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, 112. See also, van Vliet, *The Rise of Reformed System*, 30-31. The First London Baptist Confession (1644) follows Ames here. See chapter three.

between enemies."[148] They also differ "In the conditions: for that required perfect obedience of workes…but this requires no condition properly so called, or going before, but only following after or coming betweene, and that to be communicated by grace."[149] And they differ "In the effects: for that teached and sheweth what is righteous, but this bestowes righteousness it selfe."[150]

Ames also distinguished the new covenant, or the covenant of salvation, into two historical administrations. He said, "Although the free, and saving Covenant of God hath beene onely one from the beginning, yet the manner of the application of Christ or of administring this new Covenant, hath not always beene one…but divers, according to the ages in which the Church hath been gathered."[151] Following the common trend, the most basic distinction between the administrations related to Christ's incarnation. "This manner of administring is double: one of Christ to be exhibited, and the other of Christ exhibited. For the old and New Testament are reduced to these two primary heads: the old promiseth Christ to come, the New testifieth that he is come."[152]

Ames divided the old administration further into "one before *Moses*, and another from *Moses* to *Christ*."[153] His reason for doing so was that from the time of Moses and onward, the covenant of works was republished and drastically altered the life of the people of Israel. Ames explained that the New Testament is so called, "Not in respect of the essence, but in respect of the manner; because in them in respect the manner of administring, there was some representation of the Covenant of workes, from which this Testament doth essentially differ; and so seeing there did not appeare an integrall difference, of the New Covenant from the Old."[154] The new covenant differed essentially from the covenant of works republished, but not the old administration of the covenant of grace. Thus, believers' freedom is greater in the New Testament because "the government of the Law, or mixing of the covenant of workes, which did hold the ancient people in a certaine bondage, is now taken away."[155]

Ames is an excellent example of the fluid use of terminology. In his thought, the law and the gospel were two substantially different covenants, each with righteousness in view. The old and new covenants could mean different things, depending on their use. Ames affirmed an old and new administration of the covenant of grace while at the same

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[148] Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, 114.
[149] Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, 115.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, 193.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, 194.
[154] Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, 198.
[155] Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, 199.

time affirming that the covenant of the law, essentially differing from the covenant of grace, had been brought back into the mix at Sinai.

John Ball

John Ball (1585-1640), whose covenantal thought was influential in the composition of the Westminster Confession of Faith, is a useful character for bringing Reformed federal thought into focus near the time of the Particular Baptists' literary entrance onto the scene.[156]

In his posthumously published *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*, Ball drew significantly from John Cameron's work. In fact, he simply copied and expanded upon the first four of Cameron's theses.[157] Ball's appropriation of Cameron demonstrates that the development of covenant theology was not monolithic. Later writers borrowed freely from earlier writers within a general community of orthodoxy. Yet despite the unity of these writers they differed in many ways. For example, Ball went on to follow Cameron in speaking of the covenant of grace promised and later promulgated, but when arriving at a discussion of the Mosaic covenant Ball explained Cameron's subservient covenant and rejected it.[158]

Ball described two different views of how to distinguish the covenant. The first was Cameron's threefold view. He said, "Some distinguish thus, the Covenant is either of Nature, or of Grace, or subservient to both, which is called the Old Testament." He then described the more common view under two names, "Others thus, the Covenant is Legall or Evangelicall, of works, or of grace. The covenant of workes, wherein God covenanteth with man to give him eternall life upon condition of perfect obedience in his owne person. The Covenant of Grace, which God maketh with man promising eternall life upon

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[156] On Ball, see John Sutton, 'Ball, John (1585–1640)', *ODNB*; Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 45-79. Also important for the context of the Westminster Confession's covenant theology is James Ussher (1581-1656). On Ussher's covenant theology see Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*¸ 35-79. For Ussher's views, see James Ussher, *A Body of Divinitie* (London: William Hunt, 1658), especially 124-125, 158-159, 409-410. Woolsey argues that despite the posthumous date of publication the content of Ussher's book was already prepared and written down by 1602/3. Woolsey, *Unity and Continuity*, 40.

[157] See appendix 1a. Ball does not cite Cameron. Muller stated that "Cameron's model carries over precisely into the thought of John Ball." Given that Ball copied Cameron, Muller's comment takes on a double meaning. Muller, "Divine Covenants," 50.

[158] Muller is mistaken when he claims that Ball "argues that the Mosaic covenant or Old Testament is a subservient covenant related in some aspects to the covenant of works and in others to the covenant of grace." Muller, "Divine Covenants," 50. Cf. Robert Letham, "'Not a Covenant of Works in Disguise': The Place of the Mosaic Covenant in Redemptive History" in *Mid-Americal Journal of Theology* 24 (2013): 158.

condition of believing."[159] Ball understood the second set of options to be identical. He said, "this distinction is one for substance with the former."[160]

Ball even provided a helpful insight into the legitimacy of the terms covenant of works and covenant of grace: "We reade not in Scripture, the Covenant of works, or of grace *totidem syllabis*: the nearest we come to it is Rom. 3.27. the Law of works opposed to the Law of faith; which holds out as much as the Covenant of workes, and the Covenant of Grace."[161] Behind the more developed covenantal terminology lay the simple and standard Reformed distinction of the law and the gospel. Their justification for treating them covenantally came not only from Romans 3:27 but also Hebrews 8:7 which Ball uses to elicit a dogmatic contrast, saying "The necessity of making a new Covenant, argues the former could not give life, Heb. 8.7. He that is under grace, cannot at the same time be under the law."[162]

Historically, the covenant of grace is diverse. "For manner of administration this Covenant is divers…but for substance it is one, the last, unchangeable and everlasting."[163] It is important to note Ball's use of the word "last." It is last because "it succeeded the Covenant of works, but none shall succeed it…There is none other relation and respect, that might give occasion to another Covenant." This is one of the reasons why Ball rejected Cameron's threefold distinction of the covenant.

Ball distinguished the covenant of grace historically as Cameron had, according to promise and promulgation. This led Ball to speak of "the Covenant of Promise" and "the New Covenant" meaning two phases of one covenant.[164] Later Ball stated, "The Covenant of Promise and the new Covenant are so one for substance…but in sundry accidents, which nothing hinder their substantiall unity, they are distinguished."[165]

It is in the context of the historical progression of the covenant of promise to the new covenant (which are one covenant) that Ball handled the issues raised by the law in the time of Moses. As he introduced the discussion, Ball stated, "But here at the first we meet with a great difficulty, How, and whether at all the Covenant of Grace, was manifested by *Moses*?"[166] His question was not whether salvation was available during the time of Moses, but rather how the Mosaic covenant relates to the covenant of grace, or the

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[159] John Ball, *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace* (London: Printed by G. Miller, 1645), 8.

[160] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 8. In other words "legal and evangelical" are synonymous with "works and grace."

[161] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 9.

[162] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 15.

[163] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 23.

[164] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 27. Here again, Ball copied Cameron. See appendix 1b.

[165] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 31-32.

[166] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 93.

promise of salvation. As this study has shown, this question had been answered differently by various authors. Ball listed three prevalent views in his day.

Ball's view, to which he attributed a majority party was that the old and new covenants were one in substance and two in administration. Ball stated, "Most Divines hold the old and new Covenant to be one in substance and kind, to differ only in degrees."[167] Understanding the context of these words is important. No author presented above rejected the idea that the covenant of grace remained substantially the same though passing through various stages of redemptive history. Even the Particular Baptists who were often so critical of such language would agree with this.[168] However, key to Ball's argument is the idea of the old and new covenants. Was the old covenant, i.e., the covenant as made with Israel, simply a unique external form of the covenant of grace? Or was it something else? According to Ball, most divines held that it was simply another outward form.

Ball recognized, however, that many authors did not speak very clearly on this matter. He said, "in setting down the differences they speake so obscurely, that it is hard to find how they consent with themselves."[169] As he enumerated the nuances and variety of explanations that had been offered under the heading of this view Ball remarked "And many things herein are spoken truly, but how all these differences should stand, if they be not Covenants opposite in kind, it is not easy to understand."[170] The difficulty was not in Ball's thinking, but in wading through the mess of other men's attempts to explain the conundrum.[171] In their language they elicited so many dogmatic contrasts from the old and new covenants that it seemed too strong of a difference to be merely accidental.

Ball resolved the tensions in this way,

> Some Divines hold the old Testament, even the Law, as it was given upon Mount *Sinai*, to be the Covenant of Grace for substance, though propounded in a manner fitting to the state of the people…It was so delivered as it might serve to discover

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[167] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 95.

[168] Their concern was the relation between the old and new covenants, not the continuity of salvation. This will be evident in all of the following chapters.

[169] Ibid.

[170] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 96.

[171] This quotation has been used as evidence that Ball was uneasy with his position, or that he considered it a difficult argument to defend. Quoting this passage, Michael Brown states, "Yet even Ball had to concede that…viewing them as merely two administrations of the same covenant was burdened with difficulties." Michael Brown, *Christ and the Condition: The Covenant Theology of Samuel Petto* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 65-66. This is untrue given that Ball is speaking of others' confused attempts at handling this question. Ball defends his own view with complete confidence.

> sin, drive the Jews to…flie to the mercy of God revealed in Jesus: but it was given to be a rule of life to a people in covenant…This I take to be the truth.[172]

Though the law played a more prominent role under Moses, it was still a part of the same covenant of grace. For Ball, any post-fall covenant had to be the covenant of grace because "Since the fall of Adam, the Covenant which the Lord hath entered into with his people, was ever free and gracious. For when all men are sinners by nature…how can a Covenant betwixt God and man be stricken without forgivenesse of former transgressions?"[173] As quoted above, "There is none other relation and respect, that might give occasion to another Covenant." A post-fall covenant of works, of any kind, was an impossibility in Ball's thought.

Given the research above, this view represents just one strand, albeit a significant strand in seventeenth-century England, of Reformed covenantal thinking. Ball's position is summarized and presented in the Westminster Confession of Faith (7.5-6), "This Covenant was differently administred in the time of the Law, and in the time of the Gospel…There are not therefore Two Covenants of Grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations."[174] In chapter 19 it states, "This Law, after [Adam's] fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness, and, *as such*, was delivered by God upon Mount Sinai."[175]

Another of the three views that Ball listed relative to handling the juxtaposition of the old and new covenants was John Cameron's view.[176] Ball stated that "Others make the Old Testament a Covenant subservient to the Covenant of Grace."[177] He then proceeded to describe the tenets of this view, and in so doing he followed Cameron's arguments exactly.[178] As shown, Ball was more than familiar with Cameron's work. What is interesting, however, is that while Ball dedicated nearly two full pages to simply recounting Cameron's view, detail by detail, his refutation was one sentence: "But not to examine these things particularly, by this explication it appears, the Divines of this opinion, make the old Covenant differ from the new in substance, and kind, and not in degree of manifestation."[179]

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[172] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 102.

[173] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 103.

[174] *The humble Advice of the Assembly of Divines, Now by Authority of Parliament sitting at Westminster, Concerning a Confession of Faith, with the Quotations and Texts of Scripture annexed. Presented by them lately to both Houses of Parliament* (London: Company of Stationers, 1647), 16-17. (7.5-6).

[175] *The Confession of Faith*, 28-29. (19.2). Emphasis added. The law, as delivered by Moses, was not given as a covenant. It was delivered only as a rule of righteousness.

[176] Ball does not name Cameron, but the identity of the views is obvious.

[177] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 93.

[178] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 93-95. Cf. Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant*, 382-395.

[179] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 95.

Ball's reasons for writing this off are clarified in his own views. A post-fall covenant that is not the covenant of grace is an impossibility. Of course, the genius of Cameron's view was that it did not reject the dogmatic distinction between the law and the gospel, nor did it reject the passing of the covenant of grace through various stages of revelation. In fact, it navigated that path quite carefully by treating the subservient covenant as relating to both the covenant of nature and the covenant of grace. But for Ball, this was impossible.

The final view among the three (though first in Ball's order) is more difficult to identify. Ball said that

> Some make the Old and New Testament, as the Covenant of workes and grace, opposite in substance and kind, and not in degree alone: and that to introduce an unsound distinction, *viz*. of promise set against Covenant or Testament, as though God conferred Grace unto the Fathers only by promise, and not by Covenant, leaving all that *Moses* puts under Covenant to be the Covenant of works and old Testament.[180]

He rejected this view based on a comparison of Genesis 17 and Galatians 3:17, arguing that God called the promise of grace given to Abraham a covenant, complete with ordinances.[181] He further added that "Neither can it be proved, that ever God made the Covenant of works with the creature fallen: but whensoever the Scripture speakes of Gods entering into covenant with man fallen…it must be understood of the Covenant of Grace."[182] For Ball, the Old and New Testaments could not be contrasted as differing in substance, "as the Covenant of worke and grace."

What is most intriguing about this view is that it sounds somewhat similar to the Particular Baptists who used the argument that the covenant of grace existed only as a promise in the Old Testament. The problem with identifying them as its proponents is that John Ball died in 1640, before the publications of the Particular Baptists and in a time when they were still moving out of the Church of England, out of paedobaptist non-conformity, and into their confessional Particular Baptist form. If he had been aware of their views, it would have been through personal interaction only. And if this is so, why

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[180] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 93. Letham claims that it represents Perkins and Rollock who affirmed not only that the covenant of works remained active in its promises after the fall, but that the Mosaic covenant was a republishing of that covenant. What does not fit about this comparison is that Ball specifically claims that the basis of its view is the distinction between a promise and a covenant, a distinction not operative in Rollock's or Perkins' covenantal thought whether in general or regarding the legal covenant in particular. Letham, "The Mosaic Covenant," 153-154.

[181] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 93.

[182] Ibid.

he would bother to include such a view in his work seems strange given the relative obscurity of most of the Particular Baptists.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the writers covered in this chapter evince the unity and diversity of covenant theology in the Reformed tradition. By the 1640s, there were general trends or branches within this tradition. Reflecting on these branches, a few summary comments can be made.

First, the unity of Reformed covenant theology derived from the law and the gospel distinguished dogmatically. This distinction developed over time into the concepts of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, or the legal and evangelical covenants. It was a foundational Protestant and Reformed doctrine and a common denominator of Reformed covenant theology. John Owen (1616-1683) stated the same much later,

> All who contend about these things, the *Socinians* only excepted, do grant that the Covenant of Grace considered *absolutely*, that is, the Promise of Grace in and by Jesus Christ, was the onely way and means of Salvation unto the Church, from the first entrance of sin."[183]

Second, the diversity of Reformed covenant theology largely derived from the interplay of the law and the gospel dogmatically with the law and the gospel historically. Stated another way, its diversity derived from the relation of the covenant of works and covenant of grace to the old and new covenants. Special focus was dedicated to the old covenant, the time when the law was written in stone and delivered to Israel through Moses. For some, this was a particularly unique administration of the one covenant of salvation. For others, this was an adjoining of the original covenant of works to the covenant of grace, republished to show sinners their helplessness and hopelessness, thus pushing them to Christ. Hence, the adjoined covenant of works was a subordinate but concurrent covenant. And for Cameron, it was not accurate enough to say that this was the original covenant of works republished and repurposed. Its promises, parties, conditions, and purpose were distinct enough to afford it a new name, the subservient covenant. The subservient covenant looked back to the covenant of nature and forward to the covenant of grace.

The Particular Baptists reflect this heritage. They embraced the dogmatic distinction between the law and the gospel. Within the nuances of their own covenant theology, they all affirmed this point. But the distinguishing feature of their covenant theology was to

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[183] John Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews* (London: Nathaniel Ponder, 1680), 227.

apply to the Abrahamic covenant the same substance logic and hermeneutics that theologians like Olevianus and Cameron had applied to the Mosaic covenant.

Chapter Two: The Pioneering Period (1642-1644)

Introduction

In the early decades of the seventeenth century the English church was a butterfly emerging from a cocoon. The spread of the Reformation from the continent to England, the succession of English rulers, and the increasing availability of literature produced an ever-shifting political, sociological, and theological environment. Within this context, a "Puritan" movement sought to reform the Church of England and bring its credenda and agenda into line with the Scriptures, abandoning what the Puritans considered to be the traditions of men.

In this context of dissent and separation, the Particular Baptists emerged not just from the Church of England, but more specifically from semi-separatist Independents. Thus, when the Particular Baptists applied their Puritan zeal to infant baptism they were reforming themselves first and foremost, and then calling the larger English church to remove what they saw as unreformed tradition.

This context is extremely important. The literature of the Particular Baptists in the seventeenth century shows very little in the realm of systematic theology. The Particular Baptists did not attempt to develop a new system of doctrine. They agreed with the theology advocated by the Reformers in general and the Separatists in particular. But they considered these very principles to lead naturally to their Baptist conclusions. Particular Baptist writings on covenant theology reflect this context. They did not write complete expositions or extensive treatises of the covenants. There was no need. They wrote polemically against key features within paedobaptist theology, particularly positive law and the differences between the old and new covenants.

With this context in mind, it is natural to find that in their arguments against infant baptism the Particular Baptists appealed to covenant theology from the very beginning. In so doing, they were entering a large field of writing and thought on this subject. Three authors will illustrate some of the first published articulations of Particular Baptist thought discussing how covenant theology affected ecclesiology and sacramentology.

Andrew Ritor

Little is known about the life of Andrew Ritor (fl. 1642).[1] His writings and those of his critics place his convictions clearly among the Particular Baptists. In 1642 he wrote two

[1] The lack of information on Ritor prompted Stephen Wright to call him "spectral." Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, 103. A brief note by John Lewis of Margate names Ritor with William Kiffen and Paul

treatises, *A Treatise of the Vanity of Childish-Baptisme* and *The Second Part of the Vanity & Childishnes of Infants Baptisme* dated March 25 and May 3 respectively.[2] In these works, Ritor aimed his sights at the doctrine of infant baptism in the Church of England and among Separatists.

A Treatise of the Vanity of Childish-Baptisme

In the preface to his first treatise, Ritor explained that his personal move to credobaptist principles was the result of an examination of the validity of his own infant baptism in the Church of England. Having "diligently tried by all good waies and meanes for satisfaction in this point," he found it to be a "devise and tradition of men…brought into the world for politique."[3] Ritor wrote to those who yet remained in the Church of England and asked this direct question, "Whether that which is administered in the Church of England for Baptisme, be the Baptisme of the New Testament or not?"[4] To answer this question, Ritor structured his treatise into five headings: 1. The end for which, 2. The manner in which, 3. The power by which, 4. The ground from which, and 5. The subject on which baptism is administered.

Under the first heading Ritor cited the liturgy and catechism of the Church of England, demonstrating that the end for which baptism was administered, whether the parish priests agreed or not, was to regenerate the child. The action of baptism was described by the doctrine of the church of England as effecting the regeneration of the child.[5] In support of this assertion Ritor appealed to various authors (Jerome, Augustine, Zanchius, Vermigli, and Whitaker) to evince that the same principles had been taught by others.[6]

His refutation was simple. If it is granted that baptism regenerates, he said, the difficulties this position creates are impossible to reconcile. If baptism regenerates, then

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Hobson in 1642 pasting bills in London advertising meeting places of the Particular Baptists. John C. Foster, "'Grace Abounding' of 1680" *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* 4.4 (October 1915): 206.

[2] The timing of this publication is likely connected to the fact that "Until July 1641, English printing had been strictly controlled by the Star Chamber, a court of law that had become particularly identified with the abuses of royal prerogative. But Parliament had abolished the Star Chamber…which effectively ended censorship." Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism*, 44.

[3] Andrew Ritor, *A Treatise of the Vanity of Childish-baptism* (London: n.p., 1642), ii.

[4] Ritor, *Vanity of Childish-baptism*, 1.

[5] In the prescribed form for "The Ministration of Publick Baptism of Infants to be used in the Church" the *Book of Common Prayer* required this prayer prior to baptism: "Sanctifie this water to the mystical washing away of sin: and grant that this child now to be baptized therein, may receive the fulness of thy grace." And afterward, the priest declared, "Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren that this child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christs church…"

[6] Ritor, *Vanity of Childish-baptism*, 2-3.

all who have been baptized are saved. And if this is so, then why do ministers preach regeneration, repentance, and conversion to children, saying they must be born again or they will not enter the kingdom of God?[7] Furthermore, ministers in the Church of England preached that regenerate individuals will not fall away from the faith. But given that many did indeed fall away, they could not reconcile this to a doctrine of baptismal regeneration without embracing Arminianism at the same time.

Ritor described the inner turmoil of one pondering these things.

> If we should grant, that Infants are not regenerate and born again in Baptisme, then it will follow, that our Church hath a false constitution, not being constituted of Christians…but contrariwise of persons borne in sinne…even of such persons, as we declare Infants to be before we Baptize them; and then our own definition of a true visible Church, in the 19 Article…will rise up against us, and declare us not to be the true Church of Christ.[8]

The effectiveness of this inner dialogue is seen as the thinker continues to ponder and fear that admission of error here will open their doctrine to further accusations from Papists and Arminians.

Secondly, Ritor discussed the manner of baptism, arguing for a complete immersion of professing believers from the etymology of *bapto* and *baptizo* as well as the Greek texts that describe actual baptisms in the New Testament. He concluded that "if to *Baptize* is to dip, then whosoever is not dipped, is not *Baptized*."[9]

Thirdly, Ritor argued that the authority for infant baptism came from a succession of Bishops deriving from Rome, appealing to the Church of England's book of ordination to prove it. The authority for dipping professing believers, he argued, came directly from Jesus Christ and the New Testament scriptures. Here Ritor appealed to a common ground with dissenters. The principle of Puritan reformation was identical to the one he was describing. Many ministers in the Church of England had rejected the Book of Common Prayer and numerous other additions to worship because there was no scriptural authority for such practices. The church, Ritor argued, is the kingdom of God, and Jesus Christ is its King, thus the ministers in Christ's church must do only that which he had commanded.[10] Jesus' authority alone could determine how baptism was to be practiced.

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[7] Ritor, *Vanity of Childish-baptism*, 3.

[8] Ritor, *Vanity of Childish-baptism*, 4-5. Ritor is referring to the 19th of the 39 Articles of the Church of England.

[9] Ritor, *Vanity of Childish-baptism*, 12.

[10] Ritor, *Vanity of Childish-baptism*, 12-15. It is worth noting that Ritor's Baptist ecclesiology is quite clear. He states, "A true Church…is a Congregation constituted of Beleevers and Saints by calling."

After spending several pages asserting the invalidity of the ordination of ministers in the Church of England (because not ordained by congregations), Ritor briefly discussed his fourth heading, the ground from which baptism is to be administered. Citing the catechism again, Ritor reminded his reader that repentance, a pledge to forsake sin and believe God's promises, was required in the Church of England. The problem, however, was that sureties or sponsors answered the questions on behalf of the child, something which Ritor called "a flat contradiction."[11] Just as no one received salvation by the faith of another, so no one should be baptized based on the repentance, or pledge thereof, of another.

Ritor concluded with his fifth and final heading, the subjects of baptism. Drawing from Christ's commission in Matthew 28 and elsewhere in the Scriptures, Ritor argued that believers alone were the proper recipients of baptism. Once again, Ritor cited the service book of the Church of England to show "That Faith and repentance is required of all persons to be Baptized."[12] He then rehearsed the fourth heading's arguments against sponsors in baptism.

In five simple sections, Ritor had fired a significant salvo at the Church of England. His work did not go unnoticed, but rather provoked a strong response, securing Ritor a place in the polemical literature for many years to come.[13] At the end of the treatise, Ritor fielded the objection that many Separatists justify their practice of infant baptism "from the Covenant made with beleevers and their children."[14] Ritor acknowledged this and promised to address it in a second treatise.

The Second Part of the Vanity and Childishnes of Infants Baptisme

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[11] Ritor, *Vanity of Childish-baptism*, 23.

[12] Ritor, *Vanity of Childish-baptism*, 25.

[13] Anne Eaton (c.1585-1659), wife of Theophilus Eaton (1590-1658), first governor of Connecticut, read Ritor's first book and renounced infant baptism. It was given to her by the famous Lady Deborah Moody (1586-1659?). Francis J. Bremer, *First Founders: American Puritans and Puritanism in an Atlantic World* (NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2012), 94. For opponents of Ritor, see Samuel Chidley, *A Christian Plea for Christians Baptisme: Raised from the grave of Apostasie. Or, A Short Treatise, Being a reproof of some things written by A.R. in his Treatise, intituled, The vanitie of Childish Baptisme* (London: T.P., 1643). Chidley, *A Christian Plea for Infants Baptisme. Or a Confutation of some things written by A.R. in his Treatise, entituled, The second part of the vanitie and Childishnesse of Infants Baptisme* (London: T.P., 1643). William Cooke, *A Learned and Full Answer to a Treatise Intituled; The Vanity of Childish Baptisme* (London: I.L., 1644). Robert Baillie, *Anabaptism, the True Fountaine of Independency, Brownism, Antinomy, Familisme, and the most of the other Errours, which for the time doe trouble the Church of England, Unsealed* (London: M.F., 1646). Thomas Cobbet, *A Just Vindication*, 22, 42. William Assheton, *A Conference with an Anabaptist* (London: R.R., 1695), 93.

[14] Ritor, *Vanity of Childish-baptism*, 29.

Ritor's second treatise was directed at the arguments of the Separatists. As in his first treatise he divided this into five sections, each examining a different biblical passage used to justify the baptism of infants.

First in this list was Acts 2:39, Peter's words to the crowd at Jerusalem on Pentecost, "The promise is to you and your children." The argument raised from this passage was "If the promises be made to us and our Children, then the Seales of the promises."[15] Ritor's reply was to point out that in the context of Acts 2, the promise is not only singular, but it was specifically the gift of the Holy Spirit promised in Joel which was being poured out in fullness before everyone's eyes.

Ritor then considered the objection that the children are in the covenant because the promise is directed to them. Ritor countered that the promise is proffered equally to those present, their children, and those afar off. And if those afar off are not a part of the covenant until they believe, then neither are the children a part of the covenant until they believe. He added that at that time there were none in covenant with God but the church through the new covenant, thus if Peter's audience were already in the covenant, then they should not have been added to it afterwards, as declared in the text.[16]

Ritor's second section dealt briefly with texts that describe household baptisms. He argued that these passages can be used easily to favor either side given that infants are not mentioned. But he countered that at the very least the faith of those baptized is mentioned, thus tipping the scale toward a Baptist interpretation and use of those verses. Ritor added that clearer Scriptures interpret less clear, thus in comparison with the great commission in Matthew 28 the household examples should be interpreted as teaching followed by faith followed by baptism.

The third section gave significant attention to 1 Corinthians 7:14 where Paul states that in a marriage where at least one of the spouses is a believer the children are not unclean, but holy. According to the paedobaptist argument, if children of believers are holy, then they are of the covenant. Ritor first compared this assertion to his own position. He asserted that "there is now but one Covenant on foote which is a Covenant of Grace and salvation…there is but one manner of entering and being in that Covenant [regeneration and forgiveness of sins]…there is but one holynesse now acceptable with God, which is inward, spirituall and in truth."[17] With these premises, if the holiness in view were a covenantal holiness, then it necessarily followed that all children of believers are saved, regardless of age. This was not the case, he argued, thus they were not in the covenant.

An objection was raised that children are in the covenant outwardly, and possess an outward holiness that entitles them to outward ordinances, like baptism, as Abraham's

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[15] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity & Childishnes of Infants Baptisme* (London: n.p., 1642), 1.

[16] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 2-3.

[17] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 4.

children had been given circumcision. Ritor replied that these were two different ordinances in two different covenants, producing two different kinds of holiness. The "old covenant and Law…stood not by Faith and circumcision of heart…but stood merely upon nature and circumcision of the flesh." This gave Israelites an "outward federal holinesse" that was "abolished with that State."[18] The new covenant, Ritor replied, is a covenant of certain salvation, entered into by faith. Thus federal holiness, internal or external, is not in view in 1 Corinthians 7:14.

Bolstering his argument, Ritor asserted that "that which is an effect of Regeneration, is not brought to passe by Generation…But to be of the Covenant or Kingdome is the proper effect of Regeneration."[19] Also, Ritor queried, if the new covenant is the same as the old then how could it be that after the return from exile Ezra commanded mixed marriages and their children to be removed when in fact mixed unions produce holy children?

While granting a typical outward holiness in Old Testament Israel, Ritor argued further that if Jesus had abolished the rules of ceremonial cleanliness as in Peter's vision in Acts 10, and if this applied to persons (as it did in the text), then outward holiness should not be appealed to as entitling children to baptism. Rather, as circumcision in the flesh and outward holiness entitled one to worship under the law, so also "none are acceptable or ought to partake of the Gospell, worship and Ordinances, without the *Circumcision of Christ, which is of the heart and Spirit*."[20] To confuse the two was to fail to realize that "this inward Spirituall truth was Typified by that outward fleshly shaddow."[21]

After further discussion about the historical provenance of infant baptism, Ritor answered the question regarding what the holiness in 1 Corinthians 7 actually is. He asserted that it was a holiness opposite to some kind of uncleanness, and in the context of new gentile converts concerned about the intersection of their faith and practice with the circumstances of their lives, believers married to unbelieving spouses desired to know what course of action would be necessary, if any, on their part. Paul thus declared their marriages lawful and morally clean, as also the children of those unions.[22]

Ritor then handled the objection that this made the children of believers to have no greater privilege than "the children of heathen, turkes, and infidels."[23] While acknowledging that "in respect of the *Covenant of Grace*, and *Salvation* [they have] none at all" he insisted that "yet…their priviledge…is farre more then those that have not, for

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 5.

[20] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 6.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 9-11.

[23] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 12.

beleeving parents may be a meanes to bring their Children to the knowledge and faith of *Iesus Christ*."[24]

Passing on to the fourth section of scriptural argumentation, Ritor considered the gospel accounts where Jesus says that the kingdom belongs to the little children, and that of such is the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16). Ritor's first reply was that if this is granted as the premise upon which children are admitted to the covenant, then they should receive the Lord's Supper as well as baptism. And if they are denied the supper for a lack of self-examination, then they should likewise be denied baptism for a lack of repentance and faith. Ritor then explained that a careful examination of the language in these passages of Scripture shows that Jesus did not state that the kingdom belongs to children but that "of such" is the kingdom. Furthermore, Jesus continued to state that one must receive the kingdom "as a little child." Thus the qualification in mind is not age or intellectual maturity, but rather childlike humility.[25]

The remainder of Ritor's argument focused on "their fifth and maine argument…the *Covenant* which God made with *Abraham* and with his *seed*." Here he stated their argument, that "as the *Covenant* and promises were made to *Abraham*, (being a faithfull man) and his seed, and therefore upon all his seed were circumcised in the time of the Law, so the same *Covenant* and promises are made to them, being Beleevers and their seed: And therefore their seed may now upon the same ground be Baptized."[26] Ritor's response was to be more precise in examining the analogy between Abraham and believers, as well as to identify the seed of Abraham with greater specificity.

Ritor pointed to the unique nature of Abraham's role, highlighting that he was a pattern of belief to all future believers, and privileged to be the father of the nation that would produce the promised seed, Jesus Christ, through whom the nations would be blessed. Given these factors, the covenant was not made with him upon belief, though it highlighted his faith, nor was circumcision administered to him and his seed when he became a believer. In fact, Ritor argued, the covenant had already been established with Abraham in Genesis 12 more than twenty years before the institution of circumcision. It was illegitimate to make "believers and their children" a pattern of covenant polity based on Abraham's example. Ritor stated,

> And therefore although the *Covenant* and *Promises* were made to *Abraham*, and his *seed*, yet the consequence will not follow, that the *Covenant* is likewise made with all Beleevers and their seed, for Beleevers only are the seed, and the seed only, and

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 13.

[26] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 18.

> none of them a Father in the *Gospell* sence, nor any other, save only *Abraham* to whom and his *seed* the *Covenant* and *Promises* are made.[27]

The analogy that Ritor is setting up is a twofold view of the Abrahamic covenant. On the one hand, promises were made to Abraham as an earthly father and his seed. On the other hand, promises were made to Abraham as a paradigmatic believer and his seed, i.e., those who believe as he did. Confusing the seeds of Abraham (Israelites and believers) was precisely the problem Ritor was addressing.

To prove the case, he argued from Romans 4:16 and Hebrews 6:16-17 in comparison with Galatians 3:29 that the promises are sure to all the seed, making the seed to be believers that will infallibly receive and persevere in salvation. Confusing the seeds, and directing spiritual promises to an earthly line of physical descendants that were most certainly not all saved once again forced the opponent to admit either the Arminian doctrine of losing one's salvation or a complementary admission that God's promises are not sure to all the seed.[28] He concluded, "And no otherwise, [but by faith] ought any to challenge to be the seed or to have interest to the *Promise* or grace of the *Gospell*…for *Abraham* hath not two sorts of *seeds* in the sence and acceptation of the *Gospell*."[29]

Still thinking within the boundaries of using the Abrahamic covenant to justify infant baptism, Ritor considered the argument that baptism was to be administered as circumcision had been. If we use the command given to Abraham, Ritor asserted, we must follow its directions. It must be applied only to males, servants included, on the eighth day. And if a reply is made that all nations are to be baptized as commanded in Matthew 28, then, Ritor argued, we must likewise obey the command and make them disciples first.[30]

Ritor's refusal to use the laws from the Abrahamic covenant stemmed from the fact that he viewed it as a separate covenant from the new covenant, or the covenant of grace. The old covenant, he argued, was "constituted upon nature, and the natural seed of *Abraham*, [the new covenant] upon grace and the spirituall seed of *Abraham*."[31] The coming of Christ abolished "that old and first Covenant" and established "a better new and second Covenant."[32]

Ritor was careful, however, not to overstate the discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. He argued that circumcision was "both a Covenant and yet also but a signe of another Covenant (to wit) of that everlasting Covenant made with *Abraham*, and

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[27] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 18.
[28] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 19.
[29] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 20.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 22.
[32] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 23.

all his spirituall seed…which is only to be enjoyed by faith."[33] Ritor explained further that the "Covenant of the Law" had been "added" to the "Covenant of circumcision" not to provide righteousness, but to show Israelites their unrighteousness and "to be…a Schoole-master…to point out [Christ]."[34]

In perhaps the most important early statement by a Particular Baptist in the area of covenant theology, Ritor brought the main issues to light. He said,

> By this we may partly see the grosse mistake of all…which confound these two Covenants of Law and Gospell, and make them both as one in substance and different onely in circumstance, as in administration, or in degrees, the one more darke, the other more light, &c. Whereas indeed, they are no lesse different then old and new, workes and faith, nature and grace, then the Administration of condemnation, and the administration of righteousnesse.[35]

While Ritor had already discussed the covenant in key ways in this second treatise, this provided a clearer picture of how he understood and utilized covenant theology. The difference between the old and new covenants could not be reduced to outward changes of ordinances. They were not simply two administrations of one covenant, rather they were two different covenants, in substance.

Ritor saw this as the heart of much confusion in his day. He said,

> From hence this errour comes, that in their teachings and writings they make such a kinde of hodge podge of the doctrine of the Gospell, and so intermix Grace and Workes, Truth and Error, and distill thereby such a spirit of giddinesse into the hearts of their hearers that for the most part they walke in a circular maze, or as in a twilight, left between legall terrors and Gospel-hopes.[36]

The issue Ritor highlighted was that if children are told that they are in the covenant of grace, but that at the same time they remain under God's curse and apart from his salvation, then they would find themselves in a confusing state.

In addition to issues of assurance and salvation, Ritor considered these principles to be at the root of the "*Papists*" and "nationall Churches" bringing in all sorts of traditions through an illegitimate appeal to Old Testament practice. He added, "Hence also

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[33] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 24.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 25.

[36] Ibid.

collaterally have they brought the power of the Civill Magistrate into the Church."[37] The intertwining of the church and the state was a failure to realize that Israel's theocracy was "altogether typicall" of Christ's kingship in the church. "And this honour of being Head of his Church, gives hee to none at all by deputation, or otherwise, in any kinde."[38]

Ritor concluded, "That administration of Baptisme which overthrows the very nature of the Covenant of Grace and whole Gospell of Christ is Antichristian and abominable…because it stands upon the ground and interest which they have in covenant…without faith in their owne persons"[39]

While little may be known about Ritor's life, his theology is illustrative of Particular Baptist covenantal, sacramental, and ecclesiological thought. Several important factors can be noted from Ritor's theology. First, Ritor's distinction between the covenant of circumcision and the covenant of grace is the single most distinctive feature of seventeenth-century Particular Baptist covenant theology when compared with their covenantal thinking as a whole. With surprisingly minimal diversity, this model carries through the vast majority of Particular Baptist writers in the seventeenth century.

Second, Ritor treated the old covenant as containing both the covenant of circumcision and the covenant of the law. These were covenants belonging to a national and natural people, and they proffered blessings conditioned on obedience. They were covenants based on works.

Third, Ritor connected this covenantal thought to ecclesiology. The identity of the church and the administration of its sacraments flowed directly from the fact that Ritor considered the covenant of grace to be exclusive to the elect alone.[40]

Fourth, Ritor showed a familiarity with and departure from the Paedobaptist position. He was not writing in a vacuum. Though he did not provide details concerning his own life beyond an examination of his infant baptism Ritor demonstrated great familiarity with the arguments of paedobaptism in the Church of England and the Separatists, citing internal inconsistencies in the literature of both. He was appealing to both groups to join the Particular Baptists in the next step of the reformation of the church.

Compared to the covenantal thought surveyed in the previous chapter, several additional conclusions can be stated. First, Ritor clearly embraced the dogmatic distinction between the law and the gospel and regularly used this as a common ground

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[37] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 27.

[38] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 28.

[39] Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 30.

[40] Earlier in this treatise, Ritor had answered the objection that not all professing believers are actually elect or saved by distinguishing between the rule which is infallible, and the judgment of man which is fallible. The latter did not annul or diminish the former. Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 7.

with his readers to show how, from his own perspective, their own views contradicted this distinction.[41]

Second, Ritor connected this dogmatic contrast with the new covenant and the old covenant. They differed in substance, not just administration, he argued. In so doing he clearly rejected the view that John Ball had stated "Most divines" hold, the view later established in the Westminster Confession.

Third, while Ritor connected the dogmatic law/gospel contrast to the old and new covenants, he was likewise sensitive to the historical contrast between the law and the gospel. He employed a nuanced typological interpretation of the old covenant. Ritor did not posit a radical dichotomy between the testaments in which the promises of the covenant of grace were unknown or nonexistent until the coming of Christ.[42] Quite to the contrary, he carefully distinguished between types and antitypes, a physical offspring given national promises, and a spiritual offspring given spiritual promises long before Christ came.

Fourth, Ritor viewed the old covenant as a subservient covenant. It was not intended to provide righteousness, but to condemn in preparation for the covenant of grace, dogmatically and historically. It was not a coordinate path to eternal life, but a pedagogical picture of Israel's sin and Christ's coming redemption.[43]

In conclusion, Ritor's covenant theology should be viewed as a development within a larger English Puritan Protestant context. It stands in continuity with Reformed thought on the dogmatic contrast between the law and the gospel, connecting this to the old and new covenants. The most distinctive feature of his covenant theology was to deny that the covenant of circumcision is the covenant of grace through nuanced typology. This

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[41] A question could be raised as to whether Ritor believed in the covenant of works. Several comments are worth making. A covenant with Adam is not discussed in Ritor's two treatises, positively or negatively. However, throughout his writings Ritor assumes a common ground with his readers, namely that all persons are fallen creatures incapable of salvation apart from God's work. In many instances, the strength of Ritor's arguments depends on the assertion that his opponents' view necessarily leads to or derives from Arminianism. Given the strong and explicit Calvinism underlying Ritor's thinking, it is easy to conclude that Ritor subscribed to the general idea of the covenant of works, namely that all fell in Adam. Further detail was unimportant to Ritor's work because it was an assumed common ground and thus omitted. Additionally, if Ritor explicitly named the covenant of grace, which he did, then he was at least comfortable with using one half of the common covenantal language of the day.

[42] One opponent, William Cooke, took Ritor's position to an extreme. He said, "You…are grossely mistaken in calling the old Covenant made with the Iewes a Covenant of works, and a Covenant of Nature…Will you perswade men that [the patriarchs] and the faithful before Christ, were without faith and grace?" Cooke, *A Learned and Full Answer*, 81.

[43] This resembles John Cameron's covenantal model. See more on Cameron below.

view will continue to mark out and distinguish the Particular Baptists from the paedobaptists.[44]

John Spilsbury

John Spilsbury (1593-c. 1662/1668)[45], the first pastor of the first Particular Baptist church in London, holds a special place in the history of Baptists. James Renihan said, "Though few men may legitimately be called pioneers, John Spilsbury deserves that title."[46] Having left the Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey church to start a Particular Baptist church in 1638, Spilsbury became a leader in doctrine and practice among this budding community.[47]

In 1643 Spilsbury wrote *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme* in which he defended the Particular Baptists from false accusations and justified their practice of

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[44] That same year, an author identified as R. Barrow penned two publications in which he defended similar assertions. There is reason to question the authorship of this work. In 1642, there was published *A Briefe Answer to a Discourse Lately Written by One P.B.* (London: n.p., 1642). The title page identifies R. Barrow as the author. In 1646, there was published *A Briefe Ansvver to R.H. His Booke, Entitled, The True Guide, &c.* (London: Giles Calvert, 1646). The title page identifies R.B. as the author. Stephen Wright argues that Richard Blunt is the actual author of the 1642 work, but confuses it with the 1646 work due to the similarity in their titles. Cf. Wright, *The Early English Baptists*, 102-103, 236-237. Wright's suggestion is indeed plausible due to Richard Blunt's involvement in the baptismal debate at that time, but Wright's arguments are muddled. If he is correct, a third work is likely to be attributed to Blunt, R.B. *The Coppie of a Letter Sent to a Gentlewoman One of the Separation in Holland* (London: n.p., 1642). For bibliographic purposes, these works will be treated as being published by R. Barrow. As to the covenant theology of these early Baptist works, the author distinguished between the carnal old covenant and the spiritual new covenant, considering the subjects of each to be as the covenants themselves, physical or spiritual. R.B. *The Coppie of a Letter*, 3. Cf. also Barrow, *A Briefe Answer to a Discourse*, 13-16. In a manner similar to Ritor, Barrow identified a covenantal argument for infant baptism with the Separatists, as opposed to the appeal to tradition used by the Church of England. He said, "The grand argument of theirs…is, to all those that are within the Covenant doth the Seale belong: but all the children of beleeving Parents are within the Covenant *Ergo*. Here wee humbly aske, what covenant it is they intend: if the old Covenant, to the old Covenant Seales we send them, if they say they are all within the New Covenant, we must needs say they speak falsely, if God bee true…then *God* who keepeth Covenant must needs write his Lawes in the hearts of all beleevers children, they being within his Covenant, and except that faithlesse doctrine may be allowed for truth, that men may fall from *grace*, beleevers children must all be saved." Barrow, *The Coppie of a Letter*, 6. Barrow also distinguished between the seed or seeds of Abraham, referring to Christ and believers, and Abraham and his natural descendants. Barrow, *The Coppie of a Letter*, 7.

[45] For a biographical and theological sketch of Spilsbury, see James Renihan, "John Spilsbury (1593-c. 1662/1668)," 21-37.

[46] Renihan, "John Spilsbury (1593-c. 1662/1668)," 21.

[47] This church eventually became the Wapping Church meeting in Gravel Lane under John Norcott and later Hercules Collins.

baptizing only professing believers.[48] Like Andrew Ritor, Spilsbury appealed to covenant theology to support his arguments. However, Spilsbury's covenantal model was somewhat different than that of Ritor, demonstrating that the Particular Baptists were united, but not uniform in the way that they expressed their Baptist convictions.

As Spilsbury opened his treatise, he laid out a foundation of common agreement with paedobaptists in order to add clarity to the disagreements that divided them. Spilsbury agreed that the Scriptures are "a perfect rule of all things, both for faith and order" and that he did not oppose "the just and true consequence of Scripture."[49] On the one hand, Spilsbury judged everything by the Bible. On the other hand, Spilsbury understood that doctrines and terminology could be derived from the Scriptures and expressed in language not found in the Bible.

Next, Spilsbury stated that

> the covenant of life lying between God and Christ for all his Elect, I doe not oppose: and that the outward profession of the said Covenant, hath differed under severall Periods, I shall not deny: and of the Scriptures speaking of the disannulling and abolishing the old Covenant and making a new, is to be understood of the Period from *Moses* to Christ, and not of that from *Abraham* to *Moses*. This also in part I confesse, but not the whole.[50]

This was a significant admission. As stated above, the Particular Baptists advocated their baptistic principles on two fronts: covenant theology and positive law. Most Particular Baptists argued that the difference between the old and new covenants was more than a change of administration, including the Abrahamic covenant in that difference. But in this case, Spilsbury was essentially adopting the paedobaptist model of one covenant under two administrations, and resting the majority of the weight of his argument on that change of administrations.

He continued, "So that the opposition the Scripture holds forth between Covenant & Covenant, is between Testament and Testament, with reference to the order and forme of profession thereof."[51] Spilsbury was referring to testaments as "Wills containing certaine Legacies, given and bequeathed to such onely as whose names are expressly set downe

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[48] This was written against the New England minister George Phillips. Francis J. Bremer, 'Phillips, George (d. 1644)', *ODNB*. On the covenant theology of John Spilsbury, see Bingham, "The Covenantal Theology of John Spilsbery." See also, Bingham, "English Baptists and the Struggle for Theological Authority," 6-10.

[49] John Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme* (London: n.p., 1643), 1.

[50] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 1.

[51] Ibid.

in the same."[52] They are essentially a list of commands. Thus, Spilsbury was narrowing his focus to the change in testaments, a change in commands. The outward profession of the same covenant had changed. Spilsbury qualified this model significantly, as shown below.

Spilsbury argued that in the New Testament, the promises of grace and the privileges that accompanied such promises were held forth "onely to such as believe." This restricted the covenant of grace in its New Testament form to the elect alone, "as they are considered in Christ, and appeare so by some effect of grace, declaring their faith."[53] Infants, though capable of being regenerated and receiving salvation, could not manifest the evidences of such, i.e., profession of faith, and were thus barred from the outward sign of the covenant.

Spilsbury then elaborated further on his covenantal model, nuancing his critique of the standard paedobaptist arguments. In response to the assertion that the covenant under Abraham is the same as that under Christ because the same gospel is preached he replied that "If the preaching of the Gospel, being the doctrine of the Covenant, can prove the Covenant to be the same to them as to us, then all to whom the Gospel was and is preached, are in the same Covenant. But I think it is the effectuall beleeving of that which the Gospel holds forth in the doctrine of it, that proves persons in the Covenant."[54]

Spilsbury was appealing for greater precision and nuance in covenant theology. He was not content with general analogies and equivalencies. For example, Spilsbury contended that if the church in his day equated their "standing in the grace of God" with that of the Jews in the time of Abraham, it would "hold forth a mans falling from the grace, or out of Gods gracious Covenant of life eternall. A doctrine to be testified against by all that truely feare the Lord."[55]

To resolve the relation of Abraham, Israelites, and believers to the covenant he distinguished a double seed in Abraham, as Andrew Ritor had. He said, "There was in *Abraham* at that time a spirituall seed and a fleshly seed."[56] The promises of the covenant were directed diversely towards these seeds, "Some of which were proper unto both the seeds, and some not."[57]

While Spilsbury was not as strong in his opposition of the old and new covenants as Andrew Ritor, here he utilized the same typological hermeneutic. He argued that the land of Canaan was given conditionally to the physical seed of Abraham (some of which were also spiritual) and that this promise was confirmed by circumcision. The promise of

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[52] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 24.
[53] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 2.
[54] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 6.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 7.
[57] Ibid.

Canaan "pointed at a spirituall inheritance" which was "absolute, and confirmed onely upon the spirituall seed."[58]

Spilsbury went on to explain that various promises in the Abrahamic covenant were directed at an intermingled but distinguished seed. The blessing of the coming Christ belonged only to the spiritual seed. Abraham's "fatherhood of the faithfull" was proper only to Abraham and those who believed as he did. Spilsbury explained further that the promise "To be a God to *Abraham* and his seed" was a promise "to performe all that he had promised" to any of the seeds. Circumcision sealed "every part to each seed, as was proper to the same."[59] Circumcision was not a seal only of the righteousness of faith, but of all of the intermingled promises. Thus a direct correlation could not be drawn to baptism.

In response to the objection that Abraham had but one seed, argued from Galatians 3:16, Spilsbury asserted that this verse supported his conclusion. He said, "The Apostle here speaks of the Covenant, so as comprehending Christ the substance…and the Elect in him for eternall life. In which sense the covenant of grace was not made to *Abraham* and to all his seed without exception."[60] He argued that though for a time the seeds were admitted to the sign, circumcision, without distinction, Christ's coming "put an end to the type and the flesh…So that now all is laid up in Christ…and in him only for such as beleeve."[61] Thus, Galatians 3:16 supported the Baptist argument because Abraham's only offspring in the New Testament were those who believed, as he did.[62]

For all these distinctions, Spilsbury still advocated an administrative or outward difference between the Old and New Testaments. They were "in some respect for substance the same. Yet in the outward profession of them, the difference is great."[63] The children of believers did not have a right to the covenant of grace in its New Testament form because it is "a Covenant of grace and salvation" in which God calls to man with

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid. Spilsbury argued that a failure to qualify the way in which the covenant was made with the distinguished seeds necessarily entailed that all Abraham's children were saved, which was untrue.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Later, Spilsbury made the same argument from Galatians 4 and the allegory of the two mothers. The physical offspring were no longer to be admitted to an outward national part of the covenant. Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 13. Likewise Spilsbury argued from Romans 11 that the natural offspring had been broken off from the covenant. Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 17-18. Again and again, Spilsbury returned to the idea that the Israelites had been given a temporary and typological standing in the covenant, and that this had been revoked and abrogated in Christ's coming. He employed the same argument to show that 1 Corinthians 7:14 does not permit any kind of external holiness for believers' children, but rather refers only to moral cleanliness. Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 23.

[63] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 8.

promises of salvation in Christ, and man believes and rests upon that promise by faith.[64] For Spilsbury, mutuality and consent were a necessary part of a covenant. He defined a covenant as "God and man come to an agreement…upon something passing between them, wherein they both agree."[65] In the covenant of grace, God's stipulation was the promise of salvation. Faith was man's response, or restipulation, to God's proposition of the covenant.[66]

Furthermore, given that salvation in Christ is the promise or substance of the covenant, none could claim participation in the covenant without direct participation in Christ. "For God approves of none in covenant with him by his Word out of Christ, nor of any in Christ without faith. Nay, God denies his approving of any in fellowship or communion with him, that doe not believe; as *John 3.5, 6. Heb. 11.6. Rom. 8.9.*"[67] Infants were not naturally participants of Christ, nor did they manifest any sign of being so.

Once again, the problem of losing one's salvation arose. Spilsbury argued that if the infants of believers are in the covenant of grace, then they are all saved. If they can fall away from the covenant, such a "doctrine makes voyd many heavenly and divine truths that speak to the contrary."[68] The inclusion of infants in the covenant of grace also contradicted the doctrine that all are "conceived in sin, borne children of wrath, and so under the curse, until Christ by his bloud and death redeemes them."[69] To the contrary, Spilsbury countered, "None can be under grace, wrath & the curse at one and the same time."[70]

Further requiring nuance, Spilsbury rejected the notion that mere membership in a covenant entitled one to an ordinance or sign in the covenant. He argued that Abraham circumcised his offspring based on a command, not a promise. So also the church must look to a specific command, not a general promise or covenant, for the administration of baptism.[71] Additionally, it was a mistake to think that believers occupy the same position as Abraham. If the premise is granted without qualification then all believers are "fathers of the faithful" as well.[72] And if one still maintained that believers have the same role as Abraham, Spilsbury disputed, then they must be so to their servants as well as to their

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[64] Ibid.

[65] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 8.

[66] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 8-9.

[67] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 9.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 10.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 12-13.

[72] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 14. Ritor had made this same argument previously.

children.[73] For Spilsbury, the paedobaptist position created too many self-contradictions and inconsistencies.

In response to Acts 2:39 and the promise made to "you and your children…" Spilsbury distinguished between a promise and a covenant. He said, "Again, its called the promise, and not the Covenant; and we know that every promise is not a covenant."[74] This was a repetition of his argument earlier that mutuality is essential to a covenant. Quoted above, he said, "It is the effectuall beleeving of that which the Gospel holds forth in the doctrine of it, that proves persons in the Covenant." A bare promise, without a response, was not a covenant. The context, Spilsbury argued, supported this because those who responded to Peter's words were then baptized.

Spilsbury's covenant theology led directly to a robust Particular Baptist ecclesiology. He concluded, "I do believe that there is an holy and blessed communion of Saints, that God of his grace calls such as belong to life by election, unto the fellowship of his Sonne by the Gospel; of which matter, God by his Word and Spirit joyns them together in his covenant of grace, and so constitutes his Church, as I have before shewed."[75] Throughout this work Spilsbury maintained an irenic tone, expressing a desire to promote unity and brotherhood among churches. As he had stated at the outset, there was a great deal that he held in common with his paedobaptist counterparts.

When compared with Andrew Ritor, Spilsbury's hermeneutics are nearly identical, but his conclusions are not. Spilsbury made the same distinctions as Ritor regarding differing seeds given to Abraham, asserting that the national earthly promises belonged to a national earthly people, i.e., Abraham's physical descendants. These promises, and the offspring to whom they were promised, were typological of believers and the heavenly promises of salvation. Spilsbury also argued that the national earthly promises were conditioned on obedience. "As they were outward or temporall, so considered they were both general and conditionall…otherwise the covenant stood not in force for their outward prosperitie."[76] The purpose of this temporary outward complex was "for the

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[73] Ibid.

[74] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 26.

[75] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 44. Cf. pp. 40-41. "Matter and forme constitutes a Church, the matter is a company of Saints, or persons professing faith in the righteousnesse of Jesus Christ, and living accordingly, that is, in holines of life. The forme is that by which these are united and knit up together in one fellowship, and orderly body, and that is the covenant of grace that lies between God and his people, by which God visibly becomes the God of such persons, and they his people above all other." Cf. also p. 20. "The Church of God, which is the mysticall body of Christ, is not a mixt company, but onely one substantiall and royall substance, sutable to her head & matter, by which shee was produced."

[76] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 12.

bringing forth of the Messias, and the promised seed, in whom all Nations should be blessed."[77]

But whereas Ritor moved from these principles to a conclusion that the old covenant was a separate covenant of works, distinct in substance from the new covenant, Spilsbury was clear from the outset that he did not. For Spilsbury, the difference between the covenants lay in the external testamentary form. In this, though, Spilsbury did not adopt the paedobaptist model without critique. Rather, his entire work was dedicated to adding necessary nuance and distinction to this model. For example, though acknowledging that the covenantal contrast in Jeremiah 31 was not substantial but external, Spilsbury argued that this external difference reached back to the Abrahamic covenant, not just the Mosaic covenant.[78] Connecting the Abrahamic covenant to the Old Covenant, or Mosaic covenant, was one of the foundations of the Particular Baptists' polemic against paedobaptism. Therefore, given the similarity between Spilsbury's and Ritor's supporting premises, the contrast between their differing conclusions is predominantly semantic.[79]

In comparison to the covenant theology surveyed thus far, Spilsbury's appropriation of the dogmatic contrast between the law and gospel is evident in his strong rejection of Arminianism. But he did not connect this contrast with two covenants.[80] He also used the terms law and gospel in a historical sense to refer to the Old and New Testaments, which lines up with his view of the covenant of grace under two testamentary dispositions, or administrations.[81] Again, it is necessary to note that his work is polemic, not systematic. It was not Spilsbury's intention to develop a complete covenant theology, but to show how a nuanced understanding of the transition from the Old Testament to the New

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[77] Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 21.

[78] Cf. Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 1. "The abolishing of types and shadows, must reach so farre as any types and shadows were, and that was unto Circumcision it self: unto *Abrahams* Period; and beyond."

[79] This did not stop some from pitting the two against each other. Samuel Chidley used Spilsbury several times to oppose Ritor, focusing in on Spilsbury's more generous language regarding the church in the Old Testament. See Chidley, *A Christian Plea for Infants Baptisme*, 137, 142-143, 147-148.

[80] Like Ritor, Spilsbury did not discuss a covenant of works with Adam. At the end of this treatise, however, he did include a small confession of his faith in which he described what amounts to be the covenant of works. He said, "I believe that God made man in his owne Image…to whom God gave a law, upon his keeping of which depended all his happinesse; and upon the contrary attended his misery, which soon took effect; for he breaking that Law, he fell under the curse, and the wrath of God lay upon him & all his posterity." Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 43. Given his definition of a covenant provided earlier, namely two persons agreed upon something with promises attached, all that is missing is the term "covenant." Cf. also Spilsbury, *Gods Ordinance, The Saints Priviledge* (London: M. Simmons, 1646), 40. Spilsbury said that Adam was "a publick person, representing all those that fell by him, and in him." This is the standard language of federal headship.

[81] Cf. Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 1, 23.

Testament, particularly by examining the Abrahamic covenant, prohibited the practice of infant baptism.

Spilsbury was a leader and pioneer in practice and in print. This work from 1643 demonstrates a united, but not uniform, Particular Baptist covenantal polemic steeped in the theology of English protestant Puritanism.

Christopher Blackwood

Christopher Blackwood (1607/8-1670)[82], son of William Blackwood of Yorkshire, was educated at Pembroke College, Cambridge (B.A. 1624/5, M.A. 1628?) and ordained in the Church of England in 1628.[83] In 1640 he emigrated to Scituate, Massachusetts where he succeeded John Lathrop, one of the ministers of the famed Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey church, who had been forced to leave England in 1634.[84] Blackwood returned to England around 1642.[85] In 1644 he and other ministers in Kent heard a sermon by Francis Cornwell, a General Baptist, asserting that infant baptism was an antichristian practice based on man-made tradition rather than the Bible.[86] The ministers were initially shocked by Cornwall's message, but agreed to study the issue and report their findings to each other at a later meeting. The result of Blackwood's study was the conviction that believers alone should be baptized. He presented his findings to his fellow ministers and later that same year reworked and published them as *The Storming of Antichrist*.

The Storming of Antichrist

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[82] On Blackwood see Richard L. Greaves, 'Blackwood, Christopher (1607/8–1670)', *ODNB*; Douglas Brown, "Christopher Blackwood: Portrait of a Seventeenth Century Baptist" *Baptist Quarterly* 32 (1987), 28-38. For more on Blackwood, see Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, I:350-352. T.W.W. Smart, "Original Letters, Hitherto Unpublished, of the Rev. Christopher Blackwood, An Eminent Minister of the Seventeenth Century" in *The Baptist Magazine* LIX (1867), 369-376, 435-440, 519-524, 579-585. For Blackwood's time in Ireland see, T.C. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland: English Government and Reform in Ireland (1649-1660)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 98-109.

[83] He was the vicar of Stockbury, Kent in 1631. Later he served as curate of Rye from 1632-1635.

[84] See Samuel Deane, *History of Scituate, Massachusetts, From its First Settlement to 1831* (Boston: James Loring, 1831), 74, 169, 172, 222.

[85] John Venn and J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, From the Earliest Times to 1900*, Part I to 1751, vol. I, Abbas to Cutts, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 182.

[86] Christopher Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist in his two last and strongest Garrisons; Of Compulsion of Conscience, and Infants Baptisme* (n.p., 1644), 1. Cf. Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, I:347.

Blackwood's treatise was aimed at two things, liberty of conscience and infant baptism.[87] Regarding infant baptism he wrote twelve arguments against it, focusing on its problems and defects. He contended that sprinkling is not baptism, that the commission of Christ necessitated teaching, i.e., "discipling," before baptism, that baptism required actual faith and repentance, that those who are the "children of wrath" should not be given the sign of God's saving grace, that the record of the Apostles in the New Testament as well as the testimony of the earliest church fathers did not support the practice of infant baptism, and that infant baptism was initially introduced for unbiblical reasons, namely that it washed away sin, conferred grace, and was necessary to salvation.[88] In this argumentation, Blackwood cited church fathers, church councils, and many reformed writers.[89]

Following these arguments, Blackwood handled twenty-six objections. Covenant theology played an important and prominent role in this portion of the book. The first objection raised was that "As the infants of Jews were circumcised, so the infants of Christians are to be baptised."[90] Blackwood's reply was straight to the point. "We deny the consequence; because there are two Covenants essentially differing."[91] Citing Jeremiah 31 and 11, he argued that the first Covenant was "carnal" and "typical" and that it conditioned outward earthly blessings on obedience.[92] Circumcision, Blackwood argued from Romans 2:25 and Galatians 5:3, "Was a profession of the observation of the Law."[93] His position was clear. The old and new covenants differed in substance. As a result not only were circumcision and baptism two very different things, but they belonged to two entirely distinct covenants.[94]

Another objection, commonly raised, was that all those in covenant receive the sign of the covenant. Granting the premise for the sake of argument, Blackwood countered that this is not the case. Rather, the details of the command determine the manner in which an ordinance was to be administered. He appealed to the ubiquitously used

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[87] Blackwood wrote twenty-nine arguments in favor of liberty of conscience and replied to twenty-six objections.

[88] Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 1-31. This is part II of his book. The pagination resets at the end of the first part.

[89] Blackwood cited Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, Tertullian, Basil, Chrysostom, Cyprian, Bernard, the councils of Trullo, Carthage, and Laodicea, and Melanchthon, Zanchius, Vermigli, Polanus, Bucanus, Greenham, Willet, Musculus, and Trelcatius.

[90] Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 31.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 31-32.

[93] Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 32-33.

[94] Blackwood said earlier that a minister who practiced infant baptism should be "Ashamed to fetch his Covenant from *Moses*, and his signe or seale from Jesus Christ." Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 13.

example of women in the Abrahamic covenant.[95] They were equal recipients of its blessings, but had nothing to do with its sign. Blackwood then attacked the premise of the argument, asserting that if infants are in the covenant, then they are either of the elect (because the covenant of grace includes only the elect) or some outward covenant. They could not be of the covenant of grace because many children of believing parents either never profess faith or deny the faith. Nor could they belong to an outward covenant because baptism is "a signe or seal of an inward covenant, *viz*. death, burial, and resurrection with Christ."[96] To the contrary, Blackwood argued, "There is but one Covenant under the new testament, the lawes whereof are writ in the hearts of beleevers…Its called *a better covenant*…a *New covenant*, in the singular number, not covenants, and those that are in it have their sins forgiven."[97]

Blackwood took a step forward at this point. He argued that in Genesis 17 "the new Covenant is promised but not covenanted, which promise before was made to *Adam*, *Noah*, *Abraham*."[98] Citing Jeremiah 31 he continued, "Hee saith not, I have made a covenant, but I will make a new Covenant which was made good at the death of Christ, as the Apostle makes it appeare, Heb. 8.9. 10 repeating this place of *Ieremie*."[99] That the covenant of grace, or new covenant, existed only in the form of a promise had not been asserted previously by Particular Baptists. Ritor had spoken of two covenants in Genesis 17, distinguished by their spiritual and earthly promises. Spilsbury had distinguished the promises, but not into two covenants. Blackwood clearly distinguished the covenants, but likewise distinguished the new Covenant into a pre-messianic promise form, and a post-messianic established covenantal form.[100]

Regarding the time after Jesus' incarnation, Blackwood argued that "there is no other Covenant, with the Gentiles now, but that which was Covenanted before the world was, and agreed betwixt the trinity, Titus 1.2. that eternall life should be by beleeving in Christ, and this Covenant never belonged to the body of the Jewish nation, but to a remnant therein."[101] What Blackwood described would be called the covenant of redemption by

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[95] Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 34.

[96] Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 35.

[97] Ibid. Cf. Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 60. "Quest. But are not the children of Godly persons visibly in the covenant of grace? Answ. No, the covenant of grace is an invisible thing, and we cannot know who are in it, nor have we grounds to judge persons are in it, till we see some profession of holy life, and profession of faith and repentance, which infants cannot make."

[98] Cf. Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 68. Later he said, "If this Covenant with *Abram* was the Covenant of grace, yet was it made with the children of promise onely, which are believers of Jew and Gentile, and not their seed."

[99] Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 35.

[100] This was where paedobaptists saw John Cameron's theology in the Particular Baptists' covenant theology. See more below.

[101] Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 65.

later theologians. Many, but not all, Particular Baptists adopted the idea of the covenant of redemption and used it to argue for the exclusivity of the elect in the covenant of grace.[102]

Blackwood dealt with many more typical arguments and objections. Like Ritor and Spilsbury, he urged precision when examining the offspring of Abraham. He identified three seeds belonging to Abraham: Christ, Abraham's physical offspring, and believers. The physical offspring had been cut off, and the only way to be of Abraham's offspring now was to believe, as Abraham had, in the promises of the gospel.[103] He also argued as Spilsbury had, that in Acts 2:38-39 the promise of which Peter spoke was "a proffer of a promise" rather than a declaration of those who were in the covenant.[104] Furthermore, he contended that the children to whom the kingdom belongs are those who receive it freely and humbly, that the holiness of 1 Corinthians 7:14 was a civil marital holiness, and that household baptisms not only mentioned the faith of those baptized, but also should be interpreted in light of the great commission.[105]

Blackwood's treatise made a splash in the puritan pool and provoked a reply from several authors. Thomas Blake (c.1597-1657), against whom Blackwood had written in his treatise, replied one year later in *Infants Baptisme Freed from Antichristianisme*.[106]

One of the points that Blake focused on was Blackwood's assertion that the old and new covenants differed in substance. As William Cooke had done to Andrew Ritor, so Thomas Blake accused Blackwood of removing salvation from the Old Testament. He said, "Here is a new piece of Divinity taught us, that *the Covenant which Circumcision did seale to the Jewes, and the Covenant that Baptisme doth seale to Christians*, do essentially differ." While this was not new, Blake took it to an extreme. He said, "Then it followes that Jewes and Christians are in an estate essentially different…If the Covenant with one be of *free grace*, the other is a Covenant *of works without grace*; if the portion of the one (by vertue of the Covenant) be *salvation*, the portion of the other is *destruction*."[107]

Blake's reply was that the covenant ought to be distinguished into various administrations.[108] In each of these administrations, i.e., sets of ordinances and

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[102] For example, Nehemiah Coxe and Hercules Collins embraced it, but Benjamin Keach did not. The covenant of redemption appears in chapters 7 and 8 in the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith.

[103] Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 35-36.

[104] Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 40.

[105] Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 37-40, 42-44, 49-50.

[106] On Blake, see William Lamont, 'Blake, Thomas (1596/7–1657)', *ODNB*.

[107] Thomas Blake, *Infants Baptisme Freed From Antichristianisme* (London: R.W., 1645), 93-94. Cf. Blake, *Vindicae Foederis; Or, A Treatise of the Covenant of God Entered with Mankinde* (London: Abel Roper, 1652), 176-177.

[108] For one who had departed from this model, such argumentation was unconvincing. Quite a lot of the polemical literature of this debate was filled with paedobaptists explaining their view of the covenant to people who had already understood and rejected it. As evidenced by the use of the name "Anabaptist,"

commands, there was an external dimension to the covenant. This was man's covenanting with God. He said, "The right of Covenant belongs to all that externally make profession. These engage themselves to Gods termes. The benefit of the Covenant, remission of sins, justification, adoption, &c. belongs onley to the elect regenerate."[109]

But the idea of external covenanting apart from the internal benefits was precisely what the Particular Baptists, like Blackwood, denied. And they argued that the Reformed writings on this subject spoke of the covenant of grace in such a way that it brought salvation to all its members. Blake acknowledged that

> it cannot be denied, but there are many expressions ordinarily found in many Orthodox Writers, and like passages frequently heard in Sermons from godly Ministers, seemingly implying asserting it, and restraining the Covenant onely to the elect and regenerate…But when these men fully explain themselves, they yield up again to us…and ordinarily do distinguish of an outward and inward Covenant.[110]

This was the "hodge-podge" to which Ritor had referred in 1642. Different ministers and theologians spoke differently regarding the covenant of grace, raising questions regarding salvation in the minds of their parishioners.

A second reply came from Thomas Cobbet (1608-1685), a New England minister in Lynn, Massachusetts. In 1648, he wrote *A Just Vindication of the Covenant and Church-Estate of Children of Church-Members* in which he critiqued Ritor, Spilsbury, and Blackwood. In a discussion of Genesis 17, Cobbet quoted Blackwood's assertion that "There the new Covenant is promised but not covenanted." He said, "I confesse I have met with such a notion in *Cameron de triplo fœdere, Thes. 20*. distinguishing of *fœdus gratiæ promissum et promulgatum*, or *sancitum*, proving it by *Gen*. 3.12.15. But with reverence to so worthy a man bee it spoken; I cannot readily subscribe to his notion, and proofe thereof."[111]

Cobbet later explained why he could not subscribe to this notion. For Cobbet, the category of a subservient covenant was impossible. If its condition was "doe this and live" as Cameron claimed it to be, then it was "in effect as the covenant of works strictly taken."[112] The Jews could not be in a covenant of works, he argued, because they were cast out of their covenant estate, and it made no sense for them to be cast out of the covenant of works. If Cobbet disallowed Cameron's nuanced subservient covenant and

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many paedobaptists assumed that the Particular Baptists knew little or nothing of Reformed thought, and failed to recognize their puritan provenance and identity.

[109] Blake, *Vindicae Foederis*, 192.

[110] Blake, *Vindicae Foederis*, 191.

[111] Thomas Cobbet, *A Just Vindication*, 41.

[112] Cobbet, *A Just Vindication*, 66.

typological hermeneutic, it is natural that the Particular Baptists received the same treatment at his hands.

This was not the only context in which John Cameron's hermeneutics came into question. In 1645, John Tombes (c.1603?-1676) the Anglican antipaedobaptist[113] appealed to Cameron in support of his dichotomous view of the old covenant. Tombes was critiquing Stephen Marshall's 1644 sermon defending infant baptism in which Marshall had asserted that "The Covenant of grace for substance, hath always bin one & the same to Jews and Gentiles."[114] Tombes agreed that the covenant of grace, i.e., salvation, had been one and the same throughout history, but challenged Marshall who equated this with the Abrahamic covenant. Tombes argued that "the Covenant was a mixt Covenant, consisting of temporall benefits…and spirituall blessings."[115] To support this duality, Tombes continued, "Yea, *Cameron thesibus de triplici fœdere Dei, thesi 78.* saith, '*That circumcision did primarily separate Abrahams seed from other Nations, sealed the earthly promise, it signified sanctification secondarily*.'"[116] A type and an antitype, Tombes argued, were not the same thing.

Tombes elaborated on this position elsewhere, stating that "The promise of the Gospel, or Gospel-covenant, was the same in all ages, in respect of the thing promised, and condition of the covenant, which we may call the substantiall and essentiall part of that Covenant…yet this Euangelicall covenant had divers forms in which these things were signified."[117] The covenant of grace was made known through a variety of Old Testament promises, Tombes argued. But these typical promises did not merely point outside of themselves. They also had meaning in their own contexts. For example, though an animal sacrifice was a type of Christ, it still had a direct meaning in the context of Israelite life under the Mosaic covenant, namely reconciliation to the Mosaic law and continued blessed life in Canaan. Thus, types pointed to themselves and away from themselves at the same time. Here again, Tombes cited Cameron's 78th thesis regarding

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[113] On Tombes, see Michael T. Renihan, *Antipaedobaptism in the Thought of John Tombes* (Auburn, MA: B&R Press, 2001); Julia J. Smith, 'Tombes, John (1602–1676)', *ODNB*. Though often quoted by Particular Baptists, and though defending credobaptism voluminously in print, Tombes was not a Baptist, ecclesiologically. He never left the Church of England.

[114] Stephen Marshall, *A Sermon of the Baptizing of Infants* (London: Richard Cotes, 1644), 9. On Marshall, see Tom Webster, 'Marshall, Stephen (1594/5?–1655)', *ODNB*.

[115] John Tombes, *An Examen of the Sermon of Mr. Stephen Marshall, About Infant-Baptisme* (London: R.W., 1645), 39. Benjamin Coxe, William Kiffen, and Hanserd Knollys recommended this work by Tombes. Cf. Benjamin Coxe, William Kiffin, Hanserd Knollys, *A Declaration Concerning the Publike Dispute…Concerning Infants-Baptisme* (London: n.p., 1645), 18.

[116] Tombes, *An Examen of the Sermon of Mr. Stephen Marshall*, 39.

[117] Tombes, *Two Treatises and An Appendix to them Concerning Infant-Baptisme* (London: George Whittington, 1646), 3.

the duality of typology.[118] His argument was that baptism now signified only evangelical benefits, whereas infant baptism perpetuated a typological earthly pattern that had been abrogated in the coming of Christ.

Stephen Marshall claimed that Tombes had misused Cameron. He said,

> As for that expression of the learned Cameron *that Circumcision did primarily seale the earthly promise, &c*. if by *primarily* hee meant *immediately, though not chiefly*, that it sealed these things *first in order, as they were types* of spirituall things, it may then passe *cum grano salis*, but if by *primarily* be intended principally, that Circumcision did *chiefly seale earthly blessings*, the opinion is too unsavory to be received.[119]

The Scottish presbyterian, Robert Baillie, who had studied under Cameron, also rejected Tombes' appropriation of Cameron's theology and asserted that if Marshall's assessment of Cameron's typology made the best sense of it, then it was probably correct.[120]

Tombes did not misuse Cameron. The subservient covenant, Cameron's distinctive thesis, supports this interpretation. The reasoning behind Cameron's subservient model was that the Mosaic covenant was neither the covenant of works, nor the covenant of grace, but rather a covenant of earthly promises conditioned on obedience. This covenant simultaneously subserved and pointed to the covenant of grace.

Nevertheless, Marshall and Baillie misused Tombes' words. Tombes was not denying the presence of spiritual blessings in the Old Testament as though circumcision had no significance beyond obligation to the law and the promise of Canaan. Rather, he carefully distinguished spiritual blessings from earthly blessings while relating them at the same time. Tombes, and the Particular Baptists like Ritor, Spilsbury, and Blackwood, applied this same logic and hermeneutic to the Abrahamic covenant, and indeed to all types and shadows in the Old Testament.

A Soul-Searching Catechism

The works surveyed thus far, pioneering publications in the earliest days of the Particular Baptists, were polemical treatises. Though varying in tone and content, their purposes were united. In 1653 Blackwood penned *A Soul-Searching Catechism* in which he dealt with the subject of covenant theology in a systematic, though succinct manner. This work is a helpful illustration of the limitations of drawing conclusions from polemical works.

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[118] Tombes, *Two Treatises and An Appendix*, 4.

[119] Marshall, *A Defence of Infant Baptism* (London: Ric. Cotes, 1646), 98-99.

[120] Robert Baillie, *The Disswasive From The Errors of the Time* (London: Evan Tyler, 1654), 64.

Blackwood taught the covenant of works. His treatment of man's creation is illustrative of the fact that constitutive parts make a whole, even if a specific name or word is not present.[121] He said, "Q. In what condition did God create man at first? A. In an holy and happy condition…which uprightness consisted in a perfect conformity of the faculties of the soul and members of the body to the will of God."[122] Here he did not mention a covenant. He then asked, "Qu. Did man continue in that state wherein he was created? A. No: All have sinned…By one man sin entred into the world."[123] Again, he made no mention of a covenant. In fact, he did not mention the covenant of works until dealing with the objection that eternal death should not be accrued for another man's sin. He said,

> If *Adam* would enter into such an agreement with God, that if he stood, he and all his posterity should stand eternally; and if he fell, he and his posterity should perish eternally: Who hath any thing to reason against it? *Hos. 6.7.* the words are, *They like Adam have transgressed the Covenant*…So that a Covenant passed betwixt God and *Adam*, for the violation whereof on *Adams* part, he and his incur'd eternal death.[124]

His language is straightforward. The covenant of works is a clear biblical teaching.

Later Blackwood asked, "Q. What are the Covenants principally considerable, which God made with his people?" He replied that there was a covenant made with Noah and all living creatures, as well as covenants with David and the Levites, and a covenant to give Canaan to the Jews.[125] There were two more covenants "most considerable." They were "A carnal typical Covenant, or Testament, called old, second, worse which was dedicated with the blood of beasts…A spiritual or new Covenant."[126] The old covenant obliged the Jews to perform the Mosaic law in totality, "in the perfect observation whereof (it's thought) they were to have *Canaan* here and Heaven hereafter…the Ceremonial part of it also shadowed our redemption by Christ." The purpose of this covenant was not just to foreshadow and typify salvation in Christ, but also to show the incapability and sinfulness of the Israelites.[127]

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[121] Blackwood himself understood this principle. He said, "Where the nature of a thing is, there the name of it may well be." Blackwood, *Expositions and Sermons upon the Ten first Chapters of the Gospel of Jesus Christ According to Matthew* (London: Henry Hills, 1658), 842.

[122] Blackwood, *A Soul-Searching Catechism* (London: J.C., 1653), 11.

[123] Blackwood, *A Soul-Searching Catechism*, 11.

[124] Blackwood, *A Soul-Searching Catechism*, 12.

[125] Blackwood, *A Soul-Searching Catechism*, 36.

[126] Blackwood, *A Soul-Searching Catechism*, 37.

[127] Ibid.

The new covenant, however, was established on better promises, the promise of certain and effectual salvation.[128] This covenant included the elect from all ages. Blackwood said, "In the times of the old Testament there were many children of the new Covenant."[129] The new covenant was to be considered a testament, Blackwood argued, because it was confirmed with the death of the testator, Christ, as are all wills and testaments.[130] This is another reason why Blackwood had argued elsewhere that the new covenant existed only in its promises, but not its ordinances, before Christ's ministry.

Blackwood's catechism is a helpful expansion of Particular Baptist covenantal thought, and a useful illustration of the limitations of polemical writing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Andrew Ritor, John Spilsbury, and Christopher Blackwood demonstrate a variety of patterns and themes that will characterize the Particular Baptists moving forward.

First, as the dogmatic contrast between the law and the gospel formed the backbone of paedobaptist covenant theology so also the Particular Baptists were resolute in their doctrine of salvation. Mankind was condemned in Adam, unable to escape the just sentence of the law. But God had provided a way of escape in all ages, justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The Particular Baptists connected this to the covenant of grace. Dogmatically, it was the same throughout all ages, though made known to the elect in a variety of ways. For the Particular Baptists, the law/gospel contrast was covenantal. Blackwood clearly believed in the covenants of grace and works. Ritor and Spilsbury did not mention a covenant of works, but spoke directly of many of its constitutive parts. As illustrated by Blackwood, it is reasonable to think that because they confessed its tenets, they would not have quibbled about its name.

Second, as in the covenant theology of the broader Reformed world so also among the Particular Baptists it was in the historical contrast between the law and the gospel that they expressed themselves differently. Spilsbury's model was closer to the common paedobaptist approach than Ritor's or Blackwood's. Nevertheless, operative in the theology of all three of the Particular Baptists considered in this chapter was a hermeneutic bearing close resemblance to John Cameron. Though the Particular Baptists did not cite Cameron, paedobaptists saw a connection. And John Tombes, their oft-quoted ally, directly appealed to Cameron.

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[128] Blackwood, *A Soul-Searching Catechism*, 37-39.

[129] Blackwood, *A Soul-Searching Catechism*, 39.

[130] Blackwood, *A Soul-Searching Catechism*, 40.

Third, this hermeneutic focused on the typological nature of the Old Testament, distinguishing two levels of significance, earthly and heavenly.[131] The difference between the type and the antitype led most Particular Baptists to view the Mosaic covenant as a covenant conditioning earthly blessing on obedience to the law. It was thus a covenant distinct in essence or substance from the covenant of grace. Here, the Particular Baptists were not unique. Their view on this point went no further than the *foedus legale* of Olevianus, Perkins, Rollock, and others or Cameron's subservient covenant. Their step forward, however, and the main purpose of their polemics, was an extension of these hermeneutical principles from the Mosaic covenant to the Abrahamic covenant. If circumcision obligated one to obey the whole law, promising blessed life in Canaan upon obedience thereto, and if it was in the Abrahamic covenant where this began, then the Abrahamic covenant was an entirely different covenant from the covenant of grace which promised salvation freely to those who believe. The New Testament interpretation of the seeds of Abraham played prominently in this argument.

Fourth, the newness of the new covenant led some, like Blackwood, to describe the new covenant as existing only in the form of a promise prior to Christ's coming.[132] This is why the Particular Baptist position so closely resembles John Ball's statement regarding differing views of the old and new covenants. Quoted in the previous chapter, Ball said, "Some make the Old and New Testament, as the Covenant of workes and grace, opposite in substance and kind, and not in degree alone: and that to introduce an unsound distinction, *viz*. of promise set against Covenant or Testament, as though God conferred Grace unto the Fathers only by promise, and not by Covenant."[133] While it is unlikely that Ball was referencing any Particular Baptist writing on this point (he died in 1640), such views were active in the Particular Baptists' context.

Fifth, their polemical works were not intended to be exhaustive treatises. Later Particular Baptist writings focused on the Abrahamic covenant, as Ritor, Spilsbury, and Blackwood had. As a result, other covenants like the covenant of works play a small part in Particular Baptist covenantal literature. But where the covenant of works does appear, as in Blackwood, it is treated as a nearly universal assumption. Another dimension to the disproportionate nature of their covenantal writing is explained by the fact that the

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[131] This is quite different from the hermeneutics of the Anabaptists at the Frankenthal Colloquy, however much paedobaptists attempted to connect them. The typological nature of the Old Testament established, rather than eliminated, the presence of spiritual blessings for the pre-messianic people of God.

[132] Daniel King, a Particular Baptist from Coventry, made the same argument. His book was endorsed by John Spilsbury, William Kiffen, Thomas Patient, and John Pearson. Cf. Daniel King, *A Way to Sion Sought Out, and Found, For Believers to Walke in* (London: Charles Sumptner, 1649), 3-5, 8-10, 16-17. "There is difference between a promise and a Covenant: God promised, Jer. 31. 33. I will make a new Covenant. Now here he promiseth to make the Covenant, but it was not a Covenant in force till the death of Christ, and so confirmed by his blood."

[133] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 93.

Particular Baptists identified with broad Reformed thought and saw no need to reinvent the wheel. As they would state in their second confession, "We have no itch to clogge religion with new words."

In comparison one with another, there is a consensus among these Baptist pioneers that paedobaptist covenantal thinking did not give due weight to the nuance and details of the Abrahamic covenant. For the Particular Baptists, the distinction of earthly and heavenly promises combined with the redemptive-historical transition from the old covenant to the new eliminated all grounds for the inclusion of a natural offspring in the covenant. Ritor and Blackwood arrived at the conclusion that the Abrahamic covenant and the covenant of grace were two distinct covenants, differing in substance or essence. Spilsbury did not articulate this model but supported its premises as well as the hermeneutical method employed by Ritor and Blackwood. Whether it was an old administration or an old covenant that had been abrogated, the end result was identical—a covenant of salvation for the elect alone, whose professions of faith constituted the church.

Ritor, Spilsbury, and Blackwood demonstrated a familiarity with church history, biblical languages, and Reformed literature from the past and present. They left the Church of England and abandoned paedobaptism based on scriptural convictions. Given their knowledge of and experience with Reformed covenantal thought relative to paedobaptism, when the replies poured in a back-and-forth began. The Particular Baptists were unconvinced by arguments they had already knowingly rejected. Paedobaptists interpreted this as stubbornness, willful ignorance, and unintelligence. It was all too easy to label them as Anabaptists and treat them as such. Later chapters will show a repetitious character in the Particular Baptists' arguments, as well as their opponents' replies.

Chapter Three: The First Confessional Writers (1644-1659)

Introduction

In the early 1640s the Particular Baptists were forming churches, publishing literature, and striving to establish a place for themselves in the shifting social landscape. Rapid political and religious changes created a complicated context for their efforts. The removal of Archbishop Laud, the execution of the Earl of Stratford, the opening of the long parliament in 1640, growing tensions between parliament and Charles I, and the return of exiled Puritans like William Prynne, John Bastwick, and Henry Burton were a handful of the many events that produced a tumultuous yet hopeful nursery for the fledgling Baptists.

A series of three civil wars spanning 1642-1646, 1648-1649, and 1649-1651 played an important role in the Particular Baptists development and growth. These wars removed the pressures of monarchy, prelacy, and presbyterianism as national forces of religious control. Many Baptists participated in the parliamentary armies and garnered support for the Baptist cause throughout England and Ireland, demographically and geographically, as the army advanced.[1] Though cooperative efforts began prior to the civil wars, the end of the conflicts saw the organization of connected Particular Baptist associations of churches in England, Wales, and Ireland.[2] The "unifying document" of these associations, as B. R. White noted, was the 1644 London Baptist Confession of Faith in its subsequent editions.[3]

The First London Baptist Confession of Faith (1644, 1646)

Historical Context

Among the English population, expectations of reform and progress were coupled with fear and suspicion. In this climate of uncertainty and distrust, the Particular Baptists were often maligned as heretics and suspected of radical political views. To clear their names,

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[1] B. R. White, "The Organisation of the Particular Baptists, 1644–1660" *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 17, no. 2 (1966): 209–226. See also, White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, 59-94. Richard Deane describes the growth of the Particular Baptist cause under the Protectorate and within the Parliamentary Army in Richard Deane, *A Copy of a Brief Treatise of The Proper Subject and Administration of Baptism* (London: Thomas Fabian, 1693), 9-13.

[2] Their records are contained in B.R. White, *Association Records of the Particular Baptists of England, Wales, and Ireland to 1660*, 4 vols. (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1971-1977).

[3] White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century*, 69.

and with great hope for acceptance and recognition, seven Particular Baptist churches published a Confession of Faith in 1644. In the preface they wrote,

> Wee question not but that it will seeme strange to many men that such as wee are frequently termed to be, lying under that calumny and black brand of Hereticks, and sowers of division, should presume to appeare so publickly as now wee have done…Surely, if ever people had cause to speake for the vindication of the truth of Christ in their hands, wee have…They…both in Pulpit and Print, charging us with holding Free-will, Falling away from grace, denying Originall sinne, disclaiming of Magistracy, denying to assist them either in persons or purse in any of their lawfull commands, doing acts unseemly in the dispensing of the Ordinance of Baptism, not to be named among Christians: All which Charges wee disclaime as notoriously untrue…Wee have therefore for the cleering of the truth wee professe…briefly published a Confession of our Faith.[4]

The title itself is significant: *A Confession of Faith of Seven Congregations or Churches of Christ in London, Which are Commonly (But Unjustly) Called Anabaptists*.[5] It was in this context that the Particular Baptists desired to show the rest of the Puritan world that although they had left the Church of England, they had not gone very far.

Matthew Bingham has recently shed important light on the original historical context of the Confession that explains its publication for more specific reasons than a desire for theological legitimacy in the public eye.[6] The Baptists published their first Confession of Faith to influence the Westminster Assembly.

Tasked with reforming a national church, the Westminster Assembly faced the threat of Separatism in general and "Anabaptism" in particular, both of which had established footholds as the Assembly began its work. In August 1644, these matters were a point of discussion within the assembly, and Hanserd Knollys was among those identified as a source of concern. Knollys was key in Henry Jessey's conversion to credobaptism earlier in the year, and close ties remained between other prominent Independents of that day

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[4] Anon., *A Confession of Faith of Seven Congregations*, i-ii of an unpaginated preface.

[5] As stated in the introduction, though the events of Münster were from far away and long ago, small pamphlets spread the fear that the same events would transpire in England. Cf. Anon., *A Warning For England*, 25. After detailing the gruesome history of the Anabaptists at Münster, the book ended with these words, "So let all the factious and seditious enemies of the Church and state perish: but upon the Head of King Charles let the Crowne flourish. Amen."

[6] Bingham, "English Baptists and the Struggle for Theological Authority,"16-23. What follows in this section relies on and summarizes Bingham's insights.

and the Baptists.[7] To the Assembly, the Dissenting Brethren and their Baptist cousins were a direct challenge to a national uniform church.

The Westminster divines requested that Parliament suppress the Baptists and prepared a document to advise Parliament in doing so. When the document was finished in September, the Independent Philip Nye asked for permission to attach a statement of disagreement to the advice. When asked to divulge the identity of those whom Nye represented in his request, Nye refused to comply and a debate ensued. It is likely he was acting on the behalf of Henry Jessey and other Baptists. Despite the Independents' protest, the Presbyterians sent their advice to Parliament without any change.

Within the Assembly's program for dealing with Baptists was the recommendation that all those who oppose infant baptism submit their reasons in writing to the Assembly. The next month, October, the Baptists' Confession of Faith appeared on behalf of seven churches with their ministers publicly named within the document, addressing "those that thinke themselves much wronged, if they be not looked upon as the chiefe Worthies of the Church of God, and Watchmen of the Citie."[8] The Baptists' first Confession of Faith, therefore, was the Particular Baptists' attempt to declare their orthodoxy in the public eye and to satisfy the aggressive suspicions of the Westminster Presbyterians.

Covenant Theology

In the world of Reformed covenant theology, the dogmatic distinction between the law and the gospel unified thought and writing. All mankind had fallen in Adam and was condemned by the law. The only way of salvation in all of history was through faith in the promises of the gospel, i.e., faith in Jesus Christ. As an anti-Roman polemic, an anti-Arminian polemic, or an anti-Anabaptist polemic, this foundation served as a unifying distinctive of Reformed thought. What diversified covenant theology was the identification of the law and the gospel with various covenants in history. Where some writers saw the Old and New Testaments as administrations of the covenant of grace, others found in the Old Testament a distinct covenant, or covenants.

It is notable, then, that when the Baptists published their Confession of Faith in 1644 their statements about covenant theology touched on the dogmatic points of covenant theology, but were silent on the finer historical details of covenant theology.[9] This

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[7] Jessey had consulted with Nye, Burroughs, and others of the Dissenting Brethren in the final stages of his move to credobaptism in 1644.

[8] Anon., *A Confession of Faith of Seven Congregations*, i.

[9] Their silence on the finer points of the relation between the historical covenants was not an attempt at concealment. To the contrary, they had already been publishing works openly attacking the standard paedobaptist positions on such questions. They also participated in public debates on these issues. Their

comports with their purposes in historical context. The Particular Baptists desired to show their alignment with the Protestant world, not to provoke a fight with its current leadership in England.

When examined closely, the covenant theology of the First London Baptist Confession of Faith is intentionally unoriginal.[10] In fact, most of its statements about covenant theology are direct quotations from William Ames' *Marrow of Theology* or the 1596 *True Confession*, likely penned by Henry Ainsworth.[11] Article III of the Baptists' Confession quotes the *True Confession*, stating that God's decree of salvation was "in Christ" and "through Christ," including "some men," while "leaving the rest in their sin."[12] Mankind was condemned in sin because "Adam…did wittingly and willingly fall into disobedience and transgression of the Commandement of their great Creator, for the which death came upon all."[13] In later articles, they developed these truths, asserting the inability of man to free himself from his fallen condition, and the complete exclusion of all works from salvation.[14] In these early articles of their Confession, the Particular Baptists articulated the basic building blocks of the dogmatic contrast between the law and the gospel.

In article X, the first mention of covenant is made. Again quoting the *True Confession*, they stated, "Jesus Christ onely is made the Mediator of the new Covenant, even the everlasting Covenant of grace between God and Man." The meaning is clear. Salvation comes one way, through Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the covenant of grace. Their emphasis on the identity of the new covenant as the covenant of grace is important, but should not be overemphasized.

One of the recurring distinctive features of the Particular Baptists' covenant theology, as distinguished from paedobaptist covenant theology, was the argument that the new

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thinking on covenant theology was readily and publicly available to anyone who desired to become acquainted with it.

[10] On the covenant theology of the First London Baptist Confession see also James M. Renihan "Covenant Theology in the First and Second London Baptist Confessions" in *Recovering a Covenantal Heritage: Essays in Baptist Covenant Theology* (ed. Richard Barcellos, Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2014), 45-70.

[11] For the full text and a tabular comparison of the 1644 and 1646 editions of the First London Baptist Confession, including additional columns with their parent documents, see James M. Renihan, *True Confessions: Baptist Documents in the Reformed Family* (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2004).

[12] Anon., *A Confession of Faith of Seven Congregations*, article III. The language of "leaving" the non-elect was not a part of the *True Confession* and is known as preterition, as opposed to reprobation which states that God positively ordained the rest of mankind to be condemned. The Second London Baptist Confession also employs the language of preterition. Cf. 2LCF 3.3.

[13] Anon., *A Confession of Faith of Seven Congregations*, article IV.

[14] Anon., *A Confession of Faith of Seven Congregations*, article V.

covenant alone was the covenant of grace, thereby excluding covenants like the Abrahamic covenant. In light of this, to equate the new covenant with the covenant of grace was a very Particular Baptist manner of speaking. However, given that this is a quotation, the statement should not be taken too far. Reformed paedobaptists agreed that the new covenant was the covenant of grace. They disagreed that the new covenant, alone, was the covenant of grace. The Particular Baptists did not claim this in their confession. Thus, the equation of the new covenant with the covenant of grace should not be viewed as a peculiar distinctive of the Particular Baptists. It is simply a statement that all salvation comes through the covenant of grace.

Article XII states that the Father appointed Christ to the office of Mediator in a covenant. This is taken directly from William Ames' *Marrow of Theology*. Later theologians would call this the covenant of redemption. The Confession states, "a speciall covenant being made, hee ordaines his Sonne to this office: which Covenant is, that Christ should be made a Sacrifice for sinne, that hee shall see his seed, and prolong his dayes, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."[15] Drawing from the Servant songs of Isaiah, Ames considered this to be a covenantal transaction.[16]

It is interesting to note that the 1646 edition of the confession changed this article's language from "covenant" to "promise." A "speciall promise" was made from the Father to the Son. There are two possible explanations for this change. It is possible that by 1646, the Particular Baptists were convinced that the Father did not appoint the Son to the work of mediation through covenant. It is also possible, and indeed more likely, that this change is intended to communicate that Christ's mission was not suspended on any uncertainty whatsoever, but rather was founded on a guaranteed promise.

Key to the change in language is the shift in the 1646 edition to a more elect-tilted perspective in this article. After noting that "a special promise" was made from the Father to the Son concerning his mission as a Mediator, the Confession states that the intent and success of this mission was, "all of meer free and absolute grace towards Gods elect, and without any condition foreseene in them to procure it."

Behind this line of thought is the language of absolute and conditional covenants. An absolute covenant was a promise to another party, a promise not conditioned upon the performance of the second party. In an absolute covenant, there may be actions necessary in sequence for the obtaining of said promise (e.g., faith in Christ in the covenant of grace), but whether the promised blessing would be received was not in suspense; it was a guarantee. For the Particular Baptists, though the covenant was conditional for Christ, it was absolute for the elect.

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[15] Cf. Renihan, *True Confessions*, 15-16.

[16] See also van Vliet, *The Rise of Reformed System*, 30-31.

Samuel Richardson, a signatory of both editions of the confession, explained that Christ's part in the covenant, "cost [him] deare, his very life, that it might cost us nothing."[17] This is what made the covenant of grace to be gracious. He said, "If man had been to performe any of the conditions of this Covenant, it had not been a covenant of grace, but a covenant of works…Nor were the covenant of grace free and absolute, if it were conditionall."[18] Emphasizing Christ's work as a promise highlighted the guarantee of its success and the exclusivity of all performance in Christ as Mediator.

The Confession's later usage of covenant revolves around the relationship between Christ and his people in the covenant. It speaks of Christ as the "Angel of the Covenant" (article XV) in the context of his prophetic office. He delivered the complete will of God to mankind. United to the Mediator by faith, the people of the new covenant enjoy sanctification and justification. The Confession states that "sanctification is a spiritual grace of the new covenant…whereby the believer presseth after…obedience to all the commands, which Christ as head and king in His new covenant hath prescribed to them" (article XXIX). Later it states that believers, "through the knowledge of that justification of life given by the Father, and brought forth by the blood of Christ, have as their great privilege of that new covenant peace with God" (article XXX). Lastly, the Confession states that "Jesus Christ hath here on earth a spiritual kingdom, which is his Church, whom he hath purchased and redeemed to himselfe…To this Church he hath made his promises, and given the signes of his covenant" (articles XXXIII and XXXIV).

The progression of the Confession's doctrine of the covenant is completed in the previous statements. The salvation that the Father planned from eternity was fully accomplished by the Son and applied to the elect who are collected into a visible earthly entity, the church. The implications of this simple progression are a decidedly Baptist ecclesiology. The church, being a spiritual kingdom founded on the mediatorial work of Christ, cannot be a national government-controlled entity, its membership cannot be propagated by childbirth, and its members can only consist of those who manifest the signs of election, namely those who profess faith.

The covenant theology of the Confession is remarkably unremarkable in that it is largely taken, word for word, from the wider Protestant Reformed world. This was an intentional way of dialoguing with the Westminster Assembly. The Particular Baptists' were selective enough to demonstrate their orthodoxy regarding the law and the gospel,

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[17] Samuel Richardson, *Divine Consolations; Or The Teachings of God in three Parts* (London: M. Simmons, 1649), 224.

[18] Ibid.

while at the same time selective enough to lay out a basic and consistent outworking of orthodox Reformed covenant theology in a Baptist ecclesiology.[19]

The Confession received mixed responses from Westminster divines. While some acknowledged its orthodoxy, several authors discredited this fact and attributed surreptitious motives to the Particular Baptists. Stephen Marshall said, "I acknowledge it the most Orthodox of any Anabaptists confession that ever I read, (although there are sundry Heterodox opinions in it) and such an one as I beleeve thousands of our new Anabaptists will be farre from owning."[20] Robert Baillie said,

> Tell the English Anabaptists now of the Doctrine and practice of their fathers in *Munster* and elswhere, they are ready with passion to deny all affinity, all consanguinity with such monstrous Hereticks…the furthest they will profess to maintain is but a simple antipaedobaptism…We wish that all our questions with that generation of men were come to so narrow an issue; we are loth to force upon any man the errours which he is willing to disallow.[21]

Later he added, "We wish that all these who go under the name of Anabaptists in England, were resolved to stand to the Articles of that confession without any further progresse in errour."[22]

Daniel Featley, in contrast, accused the Particular Baptists of dissimulation. He said,

> If we give credit to this Confession and the Preface thereof, those who among us are branded with that Title, are neither Hereticks, nor Schismaticks, but tender-hearted Christians: upon whom, through false suggestions, the hand of authority

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[19] It is notable that the Confession makes no mention of a covenant of works. However, the constituent elements of this covenant are present, as is the name of the doctrine itself in the writings of the Particular Baptists, including subscribers of the Confession as evidenced by Samuel Richardson above. If there is an argument that the Particular Baptists in some way rejected the idea of a pre-lapsarian covenant in this Confesion, it would have to come from the choice of language in article III, speaking of the transgression of a commandment as opposed to a covenant. However, this language is from the *True Confession*, and just as a promise may stand for a covenant, so also a command may stand for a covenant. Henry Ainsworth's commentary on Genesis does not invoke covenantal categories, yet in his comments on Genesis 2:17 he notes that God gave a positive law to Adam, upon which he conditioned the obtaining of eternal life in heaven, "of which the tree of life was a signe." Cf. Henry Ainsworth, *Annotations Upon the first book of Moses, called Genesis* (n.p., 1616), 17-18. At that point, the presence or absence of the term "covenant of works" makes little difference, if any. William Ames, covered in chapter 1, certainly taught a covenant between God and mankind in Adam.

[20] Marshall, *A Defence of Infant-Baptism*, 76.

[21] Baillie, *Anabaptism,* 47-48.

[22] Baillie, *Anabaptism*, 48.

> fell heavy, whilest the Hierarchy stood: for, they neither teach free-will, nor falling away from grace…nor deny originall sinne…nor disclaim Magistracy…and to this purpose they have published this confession…Of which I may truly say…They cover a little rats-bane in a great quantity of sugar."[23]

Similarly, Thomas Edwards charged the Particular Baptists' Confession with "not holding [orthodox doctrines] as the Reformed Churches do."[24] In a word, the Particular Baptists simply had to be lying.

At the end of the day, the Confession did not produce its desired effect. When the 1646 edition was printed, Samuel Richardson and Benjamin Coxe distributed copies of it outside of the House of Commons. For this they were arrested, and the Company of Stationers was ordered to suppress it.[25] As Murray Tolmie put it, "The ingrained suspicions of puritan clergymen, schooled through a lifetime of study in the works of the continental divines on the errors of the Anabaptists, were not easily to be overcome."[26]

Despite unfair judgment and prejudice, the Particular Baptists pressed on. After all, if they were willing to leave paid positions in the Church of England at the risk of imprisonment, loss of goods, and possibly death, it is unsurprising that a poor reception for their Confession of Faith failed to deter them from their labors.

Benjamin Coxe, William Kiffen, and Hanserd Knollys

With an ample foundation laid by the pioneering efforts of men like Ritor, Spilsbury, and Blackwood, and with their beliefs published to the world in their Confession of Faith, the Particular Baptists strove to convince their countrymen of the practice of credobaptism. As their numbers grew, so did their leadership. Three leaders among the Particular Baptists arranged for a debate with Edmund Calamy (1600-1666), James Cranford, and Thomas Porter on 3 December, 1645.[27] This debate, though initially given the approval of the Lord Mayor, was later cancelled because of rumors that the Particular Baptists

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[23] Daniel Featley, *The Dippers Dipt. Or, The Anabaptists Duck'd and Plung'd over Head and Ears* (London: N.B., 1647), 177-178.

[24] Thomas Edwards, *Gangræna: Or A Catalogue and Discovery of many of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of this time, vented and acted in England in these four last years* (London: Ralph Smith, 1645), 184.

[25] 'House of Commons Journal Volume 4: 29 January 1646,' in *Journal of the House of Commons*: Volume 4, 1644-1646 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1802), 420-422. For more information on the early Particular Baptist churches and the publication of their first Confession of Faith, see Murray Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), especially 50-68.

[26] Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints*, 64.

[27] On Calamy, see Sharon Achinstein, 'Calamy, Edmund (1600–1666)', *ODNB*.

intended to bring weapons and kill Calamy.[28] The Particular Baptist debaters were Benjamin Coxe, William Kiffen, and Hanserd Knollys. The lives of Kiffen[29] and Knollys[30] are well known, but little has been written concerning Benjamin Coxe.

Benjamin Coxe (bap. April 9, 1595-c.1677)[31] was the son of Elizabeth and William Cox (d. 1618), a parish minister in Benson, Oxfordshire.[32] Benjamin graduated B.A. from Broadgates Hall, Oxford on June 17, 1613 and M.A. on June 30, 1617. He was ordained a deacon in the Church of England on December 19, 1613, and a priest on June 4, 1615. Coxe

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[28] Benjamin Coxe, William Kiffin, and Hanserd Knollys, *A Declaration Concerning the Publike Dispute Which Should have been in the Publike Meeting-House of Alderman-Bury, the 3d of this instant Moneth of December; Concerning Infants-Baptisme. Together, with some of the Arguments which should have been propounded and urged by some of those that are falsly called Anabaptists, which should then have disputed* (London: n.p., 1645), 1-6.

[29] On Kiffen (1616-1701), often spelled Kiffin in secondary literature, but most often spelled Kiffen by William himself, see Larry J. Kreitzer, ed., *William Kiffen and his World* (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2010-2015), 5 vols; Michael A. G. Haykin, 'Kiffin, William (1616–1701)', *ODNB*; Alexander Gordon, "Kiffin or Kiffen, William (1616-1701)" in Stephen, Sir Leslie, ed., *Dictionary of National Biography, 1921–1922* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921–1922), XI:98-100; Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys, and Keach*, 42-52; William Orme, *Remarkable Passages in the Life of William Kiffin* (London: Burton and Smith, 1823); Paul R. Wilson, "William Kiffin (1616-1701)" in *The British Particular Baptists*, 1:64-77. Wilson provides an additional bibliography at the end of his article.

[30] On Knollys (1609-1691), see Dennis C. Bustin, *Paradox and Perseverance: Hanserd Knollys, Particular Baptist Pioneer in Seventeenth-Century England* (UK: Paternoster, 2006). Cf. also Barry H. Howson *Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions: The Question of Orthodoxy Regarding the Theology of Hanserd Knollys (c.1599-1691)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Kenneth G. C. Newport, 'Knollys, Hanserd (1598–1691)', *ODNB*; Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, I:155, 226-232, 334-344; Stinton, *Repository*, 25-26; Hanserd Knollys, *The Life and Death of That Old Disciple of Jesus Christ, and Eminent Minister of the Gospel, Mr. Hanserd Knollys, Who Dyed In the Ninety Third Year of his Age. Written with his own Hand to the Year 1672. and continued in General, in an Epistle by Mr. William Kiffin* (London: John Harris, 1692); Haykin, *Kiffin, Knollys, and Keach*, 53-61.

[31] His name is sometimes spelled Cox, Coxe, or Cockes. On Benjamin Coxe, see W.T. Whitley, "Benjamin Cox," *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* 6.1 (1918-1919): 50-59; Stephen Wright, 'Cox , Benjamin (*bap.* 1595, *d.* in or after 1663?)', *ODNB*; James M. Renihan "An Excellent and Judicious Divine: Nehemiah Coxe" in *Covenant Theology: From Adam to Christ* (eds., Ronald D. Miller, James M. Renihan, and Francisco Orozco; Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2005), 7-24; Joseph Foster, ed., *Alumni Oxonienses 1500-1714* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 1891), I:340; Anthony A. Wood, ed., *Athenae Oxonienses* (London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1817), III:208-209; Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, I:353-355; Joseph Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: Printed for the Author, 1814), II:14-17; B.R. White, "Cox, Benjamin (1595-c. 1664)" in Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller, *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982), 1:184-185; William Hunt, "Benjamin Cox" Sir Leslie Stephen, ed. *Dictionary of National Biography, 1921–1922* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921–1922), 4:1328-1329.

[32] Parish Records of Benson, OHC PAR28/1/R1/1. William left five pounds and his books to Benjamin in 1618. Will of William Cox, Minister of Benson, Proved 17 October, 1618, TNA PROB 11/132/391. William also left two pence to the parish church of Benson and an additional two pence to the poor of the parish. He made his wife, Elizabeth Cox, sole executrix and gave to his other children, Abigail, Joane, and Joseph, thirteen pounds, thirteen shillings, and four pence each.

preached in many locations while a priest, including "Great A Hallows" and St. Paul's Cross in London around 1618, Barnstable in Devonshire around 1626, and Crediton.[33] By 1628 Benjamin became Rector of Sampford Peverel where it appears he remained until near the end of 1639, preaching also in Exeter and Tiverton.[34]

During his time as a minister in the Church of England, Coxe, like many other Puritans, wrestled with how to preach and pastor in a parish church so corrupted by moral and doctrinal error. He opposed the Laudian ceremonies and refused to comply with many of the dictates handed down from the bishops. But it was his public preaching against the episcopacy that led to his departure from the Church of England. Coxe was reported to Archbishop William Laud on October 8, 1639 and Coxe stated that "Presently after this followed…the leaving of my place, because I could not keep it with a quiet conscience."[35]

Coxe soon came to congregational and Baptist views and by 1644 he aligned himself with Spilsbury, Kiffen, and the Particular Baptists among whom he rose to a position of respect. His prominence is seen not only in his cooperation with Knollys and Kiffen in their planned debate with Calamy and the subsequent publication of their arguments but also in his subscription of the 1646 edition of the Confession of Faith and his publication of a defense of the same.[36]

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[33] Benjamin Coxe, *An After-Reckoning with Mr. Edwards: Or, A true and sober answer, to a false accusation; wherein (among other things) is shewed the unlawfulnesse of giving the name of Church to an House made of Lime and Stone; and the name of Churches to Parochiall Congregations* (London: Printed by R. White, 1646), 3-4.

[34] Coxe, *An After-Reckoning*, 7.

[35] TNA SP 16/430 f.104. Bishop Hall of Exeter to Archbishop Laud. Hall's description of Coxe's conformity clashes somewhat with Coxe's own retelling of the details. Cf. Coxe, *An After-Reckoning*, 4.

[36] Coxe, *An Appendix to a Confession of Faith* (London: n.p., 1646). Coxe signed the second edition of the First London Confession along with Thomas Kilcop. This is the church later joined by Edward Harrison, often referred to as the Petty France church. A few years later Coxe was active in Bedford. Presbyterian authorities took note and wrote a letter to Bedford on 4 September, 1648 alerting authorities to "many heterodoxe tenents" perceived in Coxe's theology. Charles E. Surman, ed., *Minutes of the Fourth Classis in the Province of London* (London: Harleian Society, 1953), 56-58. Benjamin represented the Kensworth, Bedfordshire church in 1653 at a meeting of the Abingdon Association, and "For the next seven years, his name appears regularly and prominently in the Association minutes." Renihan, "An Excellent and Judicious Divine," 10. Around the end of the 1650s Coxe returned to London, where, according to Whitley, shorthand notes from Sir John Hartopp record his sermons in the year 1660, though the location of his preaching is not stated. He is listed in a document called "Housepreachers and Places" dated c.1663 as a preacher in Petty France. LMA CLA/047/LR/02/02/001. It is transcribed in Kreitzer, *William Kiffen and his World*, I:179-180. A spy report in 1664 listed Coxe working together with "Mr Harson" [Edward Harrison] and "Mr Toll" [Samuel Tull]. Whitley, "Benjamin Cox," 57. Cf. also T.E. Dowley, "A London Congregation during the Great Persecution" *Baptist Quarterly* 27 (1972), 233. Given this data, the undocumented assertion by Stinton, Crosby, and others that Coxe conformed in 1662 and later recanted is, as Whitley put it, "inherently improbable" and "could barely be reconciled with these contemporary notices." After 1664, Coxe does not appear again until the will of Ann Grave, who left money for his support in the 1670s. TNA

Coxe, Kiffen, and Knollys were well prepared for the debate. The treatise they published contained a brief narrative of the events surrounding the cancelled debate and nine succinct and direct arguments which they had planned to employ.

Most of their arguments revolved around the illegitimacy of infant baptism on the basis that there was neither command nor example in the Scriptures to justify it. As a result, they argued, infant baptism was an invention of man, and will-worship. Not only was infant baptism not found in the Bible, but it also contradicted the explicit examples and commands given in the Bible. They argued that John baptized only those who repented, that the Disciples and Apostles baptized only those who believed, that Christ commissioned the Disciples to baptize disciples, i.e., those who responded to the word, and that Christ himself rejected the paternity of the Jewish nation as a ground for inclusion among the people of God.

More specifically, they argued that "Religious worship, for which there is no command nor example in Scripture of truth, is will-worship and unlawful."[37] Samuel Porter's reply was that there was an implicit command in the text. Calamy's reply was quoted in the treatise, "For if a thing by just consequence, by necessary consequence, what ever it be, proved out of the Scripture…though there be no command, nor no example, yet it is Scripture, as much as if there was command or example."[38] The three Baptists replied in a long description of how this method of argumentation had been greatly abused by both the Roman and Anglican church to bring in all of the additions and abuses of worship that the Reformation sought to remove. And they appealed to the Puritan spirit they shared in common. They said, "The time was, when Mr. Cal. and his Brethren did think, that this was a good Argument against the Crosse in baptism, because there was no command nor example for it in the Scripture; and it was an adding to the Word…and therefore it was sinne."[39]

Coxe, Knollys, and others had suffered greatly for their opposition to the extra-biblical additions of the Church of England. They were militant in shutting the door on this kind of reasoning. They said, "And we dare not but tell the people, that if they will beleeve Mr. Cal. and his brethren, that…whatsoever they can prove by their necessary consequences from Scripture, bindes their consciences…They will still be brought into as

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PROB 11/353/361, Will of Anne Grave, Proved 20 March, 1677. On Grave, see Kreitzer, *William Kiffen and his World*, V:92-100. Benjamin Coxe likely died around 1677. On his son, Nehemiah, who later pastored in the same Petty France congregation, see chapter six.

[37] Coxe, Kiffin, Knollys, *A Declaration*, 10.

[38] Coxe, Kiffin, Knollys, *A Declaration*, 11.

[39] Coxe, Kiffin, Knollys, *A Declaration*, 12-13.

great an observance of the traditions of men, under the Classical Presbytery, as ever they were under Lordly Episcopacy."[40]

To understand their rejection of Calamy's use of consequences, it is imperative to note Coxe, Kiffen, and Knollys' mention of "religious worship." Religious worship referred to the manner in which God commanded his people to worship him, instituted and limited by God alone. No deviation from this pattern was permissible. An explicit command or example from the Scriptures was necessary for all activities in religious worship.[41] As a result, this statement should not be taken to indicate that the Particular Baptists rejected all consequential reasoning in theology.[42] Quite to the contrary, in the context of religious worship they rejected the establishing of an ordinance based on consequences alone, especially one so dependent on positive institution as a sacrament.

Similar to Ritor, they appealed to the Catechism of the Church of England to demonstrate inconsistencies. The Catechism taught its catechumens that repentance and a profession of faith were necessary for baptism.

> Quest. What is required of persons to be baptized?
> Answ. Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God, made to them in that Sacrament.
> Quest. Why then are Infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them?
> Answ. Because they promise them both by their sureties: which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform.[43]

Coxe and Knollys knew these questions all too well, having served as parish priests for many years. Their reply was, "You have taught your people, that…actuall repentance and faith is required in persons to be baptized. And you and all your brethren have with

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[40] Coxe, Kiffin, Knollys, *A Declaration*, 12. One is reminded of Milton's famous phrase, "New Presbyter is but old priest writ large." John Milton, *Poems upon Several Occasions* (London: James Dodsley, 1785), 326. The poem is entitled "On the new forcers of conscience under the Long Parliament."

[41] This argumentation was by no means unique or original to the Baptists. It was the Reformed and Puritan zeitgeist. Cf. Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, 249, 307-315. "The parts of religion are two; naturall worship, and voluntary or instituted worship…Instituted worship is the meanes ordained by the Will of God, to exercise and further naturall worship…This worship [depends] upon the most free institution of God…No worship of this kind is lawfull, unlesse it hath God for the Author, and ordainer of it…There is opposed unto this instituted worship, as unlawfull, that will-worship which is devised by men."

[42] Spilsbury, quoted in the previous chapter, had already plainly declared his agreement with the use of consequences in theology.

[43] Church of England, *The Book of Common Prayer*, (London: n.p., 1690).

one mouth confessed, that Infants cannot perform that which is required."[44] Because repentance and faith were prerequisites for baptism, Coxe, Kiffen, and Knollys were arguing that this is simply inconsistent credobaptism; it was the right doctrine applied to the wrong subjects.[45]

Turning their attention to covenant theology, two of their arguments stand out. The first was the argument that the redemptive historical significance of the advent of Christ gave the New Testament interpretational priority over the Old Testament. They said, "The new should expound the old; Christ should, and doth expound Moses."[46] In their minds, to use the Old Testament in general or the Abrahamic covenant in particular to establish positive laws in the New Testament was an illegitimate hermeneutical exercise. This is indicative of their argument that the Abrahamic covenant was not an old administration of the covenant of grace. In other words, the New Testament ordinances were not new forms of the Old Testament ordinances, and thus it was not appropriate to use the Old Testament to govern or establish New Testament practices in religious worship.

The second argument, one which received significant attention from the three Baptists, directly addressed covenant theology. They framed it as follows, "Those onely ought to be baptized, who are accounted the seed of ABRAHAM, either after the flesh, or according to the Faith. But none of the Infants of Believing Gentiles, are accounted the seed of ABRAHAM, either after the flesh, or according to the Faith; Ergo, they ought not to be baptized."[47]

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[44] Coxe, Kiffin, Knollys, *A Declaration*, 10.

[45] Interestingly, the Westminster Assembly debated the question of the role of a profession of faith in baptism. George Gillespie recorded the debate which took place on October 9-10, 1644. The divines agreed that the parents must be believers, thus a profession of faith was necessary at some point in time. The problem, however, arose in that those who brought their children to baptism were already admitted to other ordinances. Thus it wouldn't make sense to ask them for a profession of faith when baptizing their children. But the removal of questions of profession at baptism would open the door to unbelievers baptizing their children and it would deviate from the pattern of all other Reformed churches. Another difficulty arose in that the Directory for Public Worship which they were preparing did not require a profession of faith before admittance to the Lord's Supper or church membership, but only in adult baptism. Thus, removing the profession of faith from infant baptism would mean that the children of believers would never be required to make a profession of faith actually and personally for themselves. Another difficulty arose in that the divines saw no scriptural basis for a profession of faith in infant baptism, thus they feared requiring it in the Directory, lest it be divisive or ignored. Ultimately, the Assembly voted to require a parental confession of faith by a margin of 28 to 16. Cf. George Gillespie, *Notes of Debates and Proceedings of The Assembly of Divines and Other Commissioners at Westminster* (Edinburgh: Robert Ogle and Oliver and Boyd, 1846), 88-91.

[46] Coxe, Kiffin, Knollys, *A Declaration*, 14.

[47] Coxe, Kiffin, Knollys, *A Declaration*, 15.

This was carefully crafted in order to turn the paedobaptists' covenant theology on itself. They argued, "The Major proposition Mr. Cal. and his Brethren will not deny; Because it is their own doctrine, and one of their principles, whereby they would prove; That the Infants of Believers ought to be baptized: We do but borrow their own weapon, to give their infant baptisme its deadly wound."[48] From a covenantal standpoint, infant baptism was universally argued based on the fact that as Abraham and his seed had been circumcised, so believers and their seed are to be baptized. The Particular Baptists agreed, the seed of Abraham are to be baptized. They questioned, but who comprise the seed of Abraham?

Coxe, Kiffen, and Knollys argued that only Jews, naturally born to Abraham's children, could be counted the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, therefore no gentile could be baptized on this ground. They then argued from Galatians 3:29 that the seed of Abraham are those who belong to Christ and from Romans 4:12 that Abraham is the father of all who believe. Thus, the seed of Abraham, of which he is the father, is comprised of believers alone who belong to Christ. They confirmed this by Romans 9:6-9, stating that election to salvation was distinct from Abrahamic paternity. The seed of Abraham according to the flesh and the seed of Abraham according to the promise were not identical.

Using their hermeneutical method previously laid down, they interpreted the Old Testament in light of the New. They said,

> We conceive, that this Scripture doth expound, Gen. 17. God made an everlasting covenant of Grace with ABRAHAM and his seed. Now the Scriptures declare, that ABRAHAM had two kindes of seed; the one born after the flesh, the other born after the Spirit, Gal. 4.29. The question is, who are counted for *Abrahams* seed according to the covenant of Grace?[49]

They then repeated Paul's words in Romans 9:8 that the children of the promise are counted as the seed and returned to Galatians 4 where Paul sorts the seeds of Abraham into two covenants. They argued that an interpretation of Genesis 17 that is sensitive to the New Testament's own interpretation of the same identifies not one, but two covenants made with Abraham. They said, "There are two Covenants, which GOD made with ABRAHAM and his seed; to wit, a covenant of Workes with Abrahams fleshly seed, and a covenant of Grace with Abrahams spiritual seed"[50]

Here again, the limits of polemical writing must be taken into account. By calling the Abrahamic covenant a covenant of works, the Particular Baptists were not calling it the

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[48] Coxe, Kiffin, Knollys, *A Declaration*, 15-16.

[49] Coxe, Kiffin, Knollys, *A Declaration*, 16.

[50] Coxe, Kiffin, Knollys, *A Declaration*, 17.

covenant of works made with Adam. They were not locating the universal condemnation and cursing of mankind in Genesis 17, nor were they placing Abraham in a position of universal federal headship. They did not see the Abrahamic covenant as the dogmatic counterpart of the covenant of grace. Later in the same argument they stated that "It was Adams disobedience…that put all his posterity equally into a sinful and miserable condition, Rom. 5.12. 19. And the doctrine which Mr. Cal. and his brethren teach, doth the like."[51] The dogmatic contrast between the law and the gospel was never in question, in fact it was always a common ground.[52]

Rather, their denomination of the Abrahamic covenant as a covenant of works was intended to communicate that it was not the covenant of grace and that it did not offer salvation in itself. In the light of the Particular Baptists' writings as a whole, they would have viewed this covenant of works as conditioning the enjoyment of life in Canaan, while at the same time reminding Israel of its failure to satisfy the moral law of God and thus subserviently pushing sinners to the promises of the gospel, found throughout the Old Testament, Genesis 17 included.

Considered against the backdrop of the dogmatic and historical use of Galatians 4 in Reformed covenant theology, the Particular Baptists carved an interesting niche for themselves. Dogmatically, Coxe, Kiffen, and Knollys were one with their paedobaptist opponents. All were condemned in Adam's federal headship for his breach of the law of God. Salvation came through Christ alone as promised in the gospel. They extended a dogmatic difference to the Abrahamic covenant and the covenant of grace by distinguishing the earthly promises to a national people in a national covenant from the spiritual promises to a spiritual people in a covenant of salvation. This was, in their view, the straightforward intra-biblical interpretation of Galatians 4 and Genesis 17.[53]

The distinction of two covenants in God's dealings with Abraham led Coxe, Kiffen, and Knollys to conclude,

> And here hath Mr. Cal. and his brethren been mistaken in bringing an Argument to prove Infant Baptisme, drawn from *Abrahams* fleshly seed; affirming, that there

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[51] Ibid.

[52] For Knollys in particular, a right dogmatic understanding of the covenants of works and grace had been fundamental in his own spiritual formation and life as a minister. Cf. Knollys, *The Life and Death of That Old Disciple of Jesus Christ*, 12-14.

[53] Robert Baillie replied to the nine arguments in Baillie, *Anabaptism*, 152-162. In a critique of their use of Galatians 4 he emphasized the dogmatic argument, stating that Paul's contrast of the two seeds and the two covenants reflected those who seek justification by the law, or by faith in Christ. Again, dogmatically the Particular Baptists would have agreed with such doctrine. But they saw a need for greater distinction and nuance in Genesis 17 due to Paul's description of the seeds of Abraham not just in Galatians 4, but also in Romans 4 and 9.

> is but one Covenant in that Scripture, and that is a covenant of Grace. And so have concluded; That all the fleshly seed of *Abraham* (and by their necessary consequences) all the fleshly seed of believing Gentiles, are the children of God, and are to be counted for the seed with whom God hath made an everlasting covenant of Grace.[54]

The covenant of grace did not run in bloodlines. To the contrary, "Those who are born after the flesh…are conceived in sin…and by naturall generation, are the children of wrath…They are not the children of God, untill they be born again, or born of God."[55]

Expecting a common objection, already addressed by Ritor, they argued, "But some may think, that this will put the children of Believers into as bad a condition, as the children of Turkes, Heathens, and any other wicked men; and this they are perswaded is a horrible thing, and a dangerous opinion."[56] The Baptists replied that Adam was responsible for the fallen condition of all mankind, and that the Reformed already taught this. In fact, they used this common ground, as had Ritor, Spilsbury, and Blackwood, to accuse the paedobaptists of inconsistency that led to Arminianism. Naming Stephen Marshall, Thomas Blake, and the Directory for Public Worship, they stated that if children belong to the covenant of grace, yet may fall away from it, then man can lose his salvation.[57] This doctrine, the Baptists asserted, was far more dangerous and damaging than their own.[58]

With Ritor in 1642, Spilsbury in 1643, Blackwood in 1644, and Coxe, Kiffen, and Knollys in 1645, the Particular Baptists had all guns firing at Infant Baptism in the early 1640s.[59] The war, having commenced, did not abate throughout the seventeenth century. Coxe, Kiffen, and Knollys' work demonstrates a great deal of continuity with Ritor, Spilsbury, and Blackwood. They were Puritans, several of them former parish ministers, and several of them trained at the major universities of the day, who eagerly desired to apply the hermeneutical and theological principles of the Reformation to the doctrines of the covenants, baptism, and the church.

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[54] Coxe, Kiffin, Knollys, *A Declaration*, 17.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Coxe, Kiffin, Knollys, *A Declaration*, 18.

[58] Here they recommended the reader to obtain a copy of Tombes *An Examen of the Sermon of Mr. Stephen Marshall, About Infant-Baptisme*. This is the work, discussed in the chapter above, where Tombes employs Cameron's typology.

[59] Thomas Edwards mentioned, but did not interact with, Coxe, Kiffen, and Knollys' publication. Cf. Edwards, *Gangræna*, 96. Coxe replied and said, "I am not ashamed of the assistance I gave in putting out that Declaration: What have you to say against it?…But it is enough that your Gravity cals it, A Pamphlet. Indeed it is not very large: for it was not needfull, as we conceived, that it should be large…And if you will blot out of your *Gangraena* all the words of Falshood and Folly with which it is stuffed, it will, I suppose, be much shorter then this Pamphlet." Coxe, *An After-Reckoning*, 13.

Each of these writers aimed at the Abrahamic covenant, especially the seeds of Abraham. Ritor had stated that circumcision was a covenant to the natural offspring, yet a sign of another covenant, the covenant of grace. Spilsbury argued that within the Abrahamic covenant national promises were delivered on the condition of obedience to the national seed, while spiritual promises were delivered absolutely, or without the condition of obedience, to a spiritual seed. Spilsbury also stated that the national promises were pictures of the spiritual reality. Blackwood had plainly stated that the covenant of grace differed from the Abrahamic covenant in substance, arguing that the new covenant was promised, but not covenanted, in Genesis 17. And he narrowed the seed of Abraham to Christ, believers in Christ, and Abraham's natural descendants. Coxe, Kiffen, and Knollys were no different. Their primary contribution was to state plainly and simply that two covenants were made with Abraham, a covenant of works and a covenant of grace. This became the primary form of expressing Particular Baptist polemical covenant theology.

The publication of this work demonstrates the Particular Baptists' willingness to state their case and defend it, despite opposition, slander, and misrepresentation. Nothing demonstrates so evidently the suspicion with which the Baptists were viewed as the cancellation of this very debate on the grounds that Calamy's life would be threatened by a sword-bearing Anabaptist. Compared with their willingness to go to jail peaceably for their beliefs, such a portrait hardly corresponds to reality.[60] Even so, the Particular Baptists were not afraid to debate publicly or to publish their ideas when such debates did not take place.

Thomas Patient

Thomas Patient (d. July 29, 1666)[61] was a Particular Baptist who joined William Kiffen's church as a co-pastor in 1644. Prior to this, Patient had moved to New England, perhaps in the 1630s, where he came to credobaptist convictions. A warrant was issued for his arrest when he refused to baptize his child, and in 1643 he fled to England to escape the

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[60] On the Particular Baptists' association with radical movements like the Levellers, Fifth Monarchy, Quakers, and others see chapter four in Bustin, *Paradox and Perseverance*, 117-170.

[61] On Patient, sometimes spelled Patience, see Kreitzer, *William Kiffen and his World*, II:196-257. This contains transcriptions of several source documents elucidating the role of Thomas Patient in Ireland, the dates and details of his whereabouts, and his continued cooperation with William Kiffen from the 1640s to the 1660s. See also, Crawford Gribben, *God's Irishmen: Theological Debates in Cromwellian Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 79-98; B.R. White, "Thomas Patient in England and Ireland" in *Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal 2* (1969-70): 36-48; Greaves, "Patient, Thomas (*d.* 1666)," *ODNB*; Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland*, 101-102, 138, 146. His will was proved 22 August, 1666. He made his wife, Sarah, his full executrix and named no children in the will. TNA PROB 11/132/391, Will of Thomas Patient.

authorities.[62] He signed the 1644 and 1646 editions of the First London Confession of Faith alongside Kiffen. Around 1650 he was sent to Ireland as a chaplain with Cromwell's army under Colonel Henry Ireton. Patient also served under Henry Cromwell and corresponded with Oliver Cromwell himself. While in Ireland with the army, Patient was active in Baptist churches in Kilkenny, Waterford, and Dublin. In 1655, Christopher Blackwood took over for Patient at the church in Dublin, freeing Patient to serve as a missionary throughout Ireland over the next few years. He remained in Ireland with the army until the spring of 1660 when he returned to England and spent several years working in the Pithay Baptist church in Bristol. In 1666, Patient rejoined Kiffen's church, being ordained there as a pastor by Edward Harrison (c.1618-c.1673) and Hanserd Knollys on June 28. He died a month later on July 29.

While in Ireland, Patient published an extensive work entitled *The Doctrine of Baptism, And the Distinction of the Covenants*. At 179 pages, this treatise stands out as one of the first of considerable length, if not the first, written on this subject by a Particular Baptist.[63] A subtitle, appearing at the beginning of the body of the text, makes his aim clear: *A Plain Christian Treatise, explaining the Doctrine of Baptism, and the two Covenants made with Abraham, and his twofold Seed*. As a close friend and associate of Kiffen and Blackwood, the genealogy of his arguments is not difficult to discern.

The Doctrine of Baptism was a polemical book, not systematic, covering the two main fronts on which this debate took place, positive law and covenant theology. The beginning of the book, drawing from Peter's words in Acts 2:37-38, addressed the nature of baptism and its place in the progression of the life of a believer, arguing that faith and repentance precede baptism.[64] Patient then discussed what baptism is, and to whom it is to be administered. Having finished this, Patient turned to covenant theology. He said,

> I shall leave what I have said…and shall begin to speak to the main Argument or ground, usually pleaded by all except Papists, for Childrens baptism, and that is, Though there be no command nor example yet there is a consequence, viz. the

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[62] Patient describes this period of his life in Thomas Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism, And the Distinction of the Covenants* (London: Henry Hills, 1654), i-xvii of an unpaginated preface.

[63] Many short polemical treatises had been written by 1654, and Samuel Fisher had published an immensely long volume of 632 pages entitled *Babybaptism Meer Babism: Or an Answer to Nobody in five words, to Every-Body who finds himself conern'd in't.* (London: Henry Hills, 1653), but it covered various topics, not just baptism or covenant theology.

[64] Like Ritor, Coxe, Kiffen, and Knollys, Patient later reminded the reader that the Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer also required a profession of faith and repentance before baptism. Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 130.

> Covenant of life being made to Believers, and their seed comming out of their loins, Baptism, being an Ordinance of that Covenant, doth also belong to them.[65]

Patient rejected the argument on two grounds. First, as Coxe, Kiffen, and Knollys had, he disallowed consequences that contradicted commands. Infant baptism, he argued, went against the great commission given by Christ in Matthew 28. He said, "whatsoever consequence men do draw from Scripture, that crosseth the plain Commands of God (to be sure) cannot be of God."[66]

The second ground on which Patient rejected the argument was that he denied the covenant of circumcision to be the covenant of grace. Patient dedicated the greater portion of the book to addressing this question, organizing his argument into four headings: first, "That there is two Covenants held forth in Scripture, the one a Covenant of Grace, and the other a Covenant of Works, or an absolute Covenant, and a Conditional Covenant," second, that "the Covenant of Circumcision was no Covenant of eternal life, but a Conditional Covenant, a Covenant of Works," third, that "None but believers ever had; or shall have right to the Covenant of Grace," and fourth, a response to typical Scriptures used to allege the covenant of life passing through physical descent.[67]

In his first argument that there are two covenants, a covenant of works and a covenant of grace, Patient turned to Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 8-10 where a new covenant of which Christ is the Mediator is contrasted with an old covenant that was dedicated with the blood of goats and bulls and passed away. Patient argued that this old covenant was "that typical Covenant of works, which run upon the fleshly line of *Abraham*, till Christ came out of the flesh of *Abraham*." This contrasted with the new covenant, or covenant of grace, wherein "is nothing but what God hath undertaken to perform, and to work in the Creature."[68]

If there was an old covenant, dedicated with the blood of animals and broken through disobedience, and if there was a new covenant, dedicated with the blood of Jesus Christ and unbreakable due to God's promise to supply all he demands, then these were two entirely different covenants.[69] Patient commented, "Now if any please but to search these Scriptures it will appear that there is two real distinct Covenants or Testaments, the one of Grace, and the other of works."[70] This was a rejection of the common paedobaptist

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[65] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 25.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 28.

[68] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 30-31.

[69] Cartwright and Perkins had drawn a dogmatic and substantial covenantal contrast from Jeremiah 31 as well.

[70] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 30. In asserting that the covenant of grace was unconditional or absolute, Patient was not taking an extreme position. He later stated, "It is true, the promise of salvation…is

federalism that stated that the two testaments or two covenants mentioned in Jeremiah were but two outward administrations of the covenant of grace. The paedobaptist argument posited a substantial agreement between the two testaments. They were the same kind of thing. Patient argued that given the biblical data concerning their differences, such an opinion was untenable.

From the Garden of Eden, Patient contended, the same promise of salvation in the same covenant had passed throughout history. But the clarity and fullness of its revelation increased over time. He said, "This covenant of grace to eternal life, was first more obscurely and darkly revealed to our first parents." Referring to the promise of the crushing of the serpent's head by the seed of the woman he added, "This speech contains in substance, the covenant of grace, Christ the true spiritual seed being here promised, who in Scripture is held forth to be the very substance and marrow of the New covenant."[71] The force of his argument was that well before Abraham's covenant, the covenant of grace had been established as a covenant of salvation to all who are in Christ. He said, "This new covenant was never intailed upon any fleshly line or generation…but was still confirmed of God in Christ, and to such souls only in Christ."[72]

Passing to his second argument, Patient dedicated seven supporting arguments to prove that the covenant of circumcision was not a covenant of eternal life.[73] In preparation for these arguments, Patient raised the objection that some considered the covenant of circumcision to be the covenant of grace because God declares that he will be the God of the covenant people. Patient's reply was that this was far too general a definition of the substance of the covenant of grace. In any covenant, God was the God of the covenant people. The question to be asked was, on what basis did God covenant himself to be the

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held out with a condition…But we are not to think, that this grace of Faith and Repentance, are any Qualifications…but in the new covenant, the Lord undertakes to work the condition." Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 35. John Barret did not accept Patient's qualifications and accused him of truly holding to an absolute absence of all conditions in the covenant. John Barret, *God's Love to Man, and Man's Duty towards God: Manifested in several Discourses on the Covenants of Works and Grace. Wherein divers Propositions are laid down, and sundry Cases resolved* (London: Jonathan Robinson, 1678), 145.

[71] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 37. He added, "So that I understand that here in this third of *Genesis* is the whole New covenant included."

[72] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 38.

[73] Like other Particular Baptists, Patient's desire was to distinguish gospel promises from earthly promises. He had already argued that the promises of the gospel were present in Genesis 12, 15, and 17. Cf. Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 39-42. He viewed those promises as belonging to the covenant of grace, not the covenant of circumcision, for the reasons stated above regarding their difference in substance. Patient also discussed the meaning of "everlasting" in Genesis 17, comparing it with other uses of the term in the Old Testament, concluding that it meant "while the law lasted." Cf. Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 42-44. John Barret considered this view to characterize the Particular Baptists. Cf. Barret, *God's Love to Man, and Man's Duty towards God*, 335. This page is wrongly marked 375.

God of a given people? Patient replied, "God either gives and makes himself over in a covenant of works, which is upon a condition of works done in the creature; or else he gives himself in an absolute covenant of grace in Christ Jesus the Mediator without all condition of works to be fulfilled in the creature."[74] His arguments, then, were designed to prove that although God was indeed the God of Abraham's offspring according to the flesh, it was on the basis of their continued obedience to laws, not promises which God committed to perform.

The first argument to prove the covenant of circumcision to be a covenant of works was that it was conditional. Patient proved this by appealing to Genesis 17:7-14 where God commands Abraham and his descendants to keep their part of the covenant, summarized in the command to circumcise. In comparison with Romans 2:25, Patient argued that circumcision was an obligation to keep all laws commanded in the covenant and paraphrased God's dealings with Abraham as, "I will be a God to thee…upon condition that thou and they will be circumcised and keep the Law."[75] Failure to comply with God's commands meant forfeiture of the blessings of the covenant.[76]

The second argument to prove the covenant of circumcision to be a covenant of works was that it was a national covenant, whereas the covenant of grace was always for all nations.[77] Using Paul's discussion in Romans 9, Patient argued that Israel possessed special privileges as a nation, especially the presence of the promises of the gospel. But, he continued, the presence of the gospel promises in their national life was no guarantee of any actual interest in those promises. Being of Abraham's covenant did not save the Israelites. Comparing with Romans 4, Patient argued that it was precisely trusting in the obedience of the covenant of circumcision that Paul opposed to the belief in the gospel promises. He confirmed this from Galatians 4 and the contrast between a covenant in the flesh requiring obedience and a covenant of salvation made up of a Spirit-born people.

The third argument to prove the covenant of circumcision to be a covenant of works was that it promised earthly temporary blessings, not eternal life.[78] Patient proved this from Hebrews 8:6, stating that the old covenant was shadowy and passed away. The new covenant was established on "better promises." In comparison with Deuteronomy 30 and Jeremiah 11, Patient argued that throughout the Old Testament, the land of Canaan was the focal point of God's covenant with Abraham's descendants, and its enjoyment was repeatedly conditioned on the obedience of the people to the law.

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[74] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 44.

[75] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 47.

[76] Patient reminded the reader at the end of this argument that God had previously made the covenant of grace with Abraham and all his spiritual seed in an absolute manner apart from works or conditions in the covenant partner.

[77] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 48-57.

[78] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 57-60.

The fourth argument to prove the covenant of circumcision to be a covenant of works was that in the covenant of circumcision, one could bring another into the covenant by spending money, i.e., buying a servant, whereas in the new covenant the apostles rejected Simon Magus' desire to buy the gift of the Spirit.[79] The qualifications for inclusion in the covenant of circumcision were not spiritual, this it could not be the covenant of grace.

The fifth argument to prove the covenant of circumcision to be a covenant of works was that there were some outside of this covenant who were saved. And that there were some in it that were damned.[80] Lot, though a contemporary of Abraham, was not comprehended in the covenant of circumcision and had no right to a blessed life in Canaan, yet he was saved. And Israel, though numerous in population, contained only a remnant of believers.

The sixth argument to prove the covenant of circumcision to be a covenant of works was that it could be broken and those who broke it would be cut off.[81] Proved from Genesis 17:14 and Jeremiah 31, Abraham's descendants broke the covenant through disobedience to the law. The new covenant, in contrast, could not be broken because God engaged to perform the conditions required in the covenant. And, Patient argued, the promises ran through Christ, in whom they are "yea and amen" (2 Cor. 1:20).[82] A covenant that could be broken, and that included the children of the devil (John 8) was a covenant of works, not a covenant of eternal life.

The seventh argument to prove the covenant of circumcision to be a covenant of works was argued from the absurdity of the contrary.[83] If the premise were granted that the covenant of circumcision were the covenant of grace, Patient argued, then it followed that the benefits of the covenant of grace, e.g., "adoption or Sonship, Justification, and the inward work of Sanctification," were granted by natural generation and not regeneration. This would deny the doctrine that all mankind are children of wrath by nature, it would necessitate the doctrine that one could lose one's salvation, it would remove the need for conversion, and it would require a national church comprised of natural offspring. All of

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[79] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 60-61.

[80] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 61-64.

[81] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 64-70.

[82] Here Patient considered the objection that in the New Testament there are some who profess faith but are later cut off. Patient replied that though we do not have infallible judgment, we have an infallible rule. He said, "It is only poor unfaithful Man, hypocritical, dissembling, proud man, that saith he is in the Covenant of life, when it proves not so, or when it visibly proves the contrary, for Saints have a rule to disown such. But this is a most certain truth, that God did never put a soul away…in a covenant of life." Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 67-68.

[83] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 70-83.

this was impossible, Patient contended, because the only way of being in the covenant was through "union or in-being in Christ by faith."[84]

Having concluded his arguments that the covenant of circumcision was not the covenant of grace, Patient began his third main argument to prove that the covenant of life was always and only made with believers. Interestingly, Patient argued that an outward covenant of obedience was established immediately after the fall with Adam and his offspring. Based on Cain and Abel's sacrificial practices, God's judgment of mankind for sinful marriage practices, the clean and unclean distinctions operative on the ark in Noah's time, and other elements of early biblical history, for Patient the covenant of circumcision was a further development of this outward fleshly covenant which he called a "ceremonial covenant of worship."[85]

The purpose of this outward covenant, from the beginning, was to preserve the promise of the seed and to specify the genealogical line from which the seed would be born. The restrictions of the covenant to particular lines, such as between Isaac and Esau, were not based on belief, but particular physical descent. Thus the necessity and purpose of this covenant were intentionally temporary. Patient concluded, "But when Christ was come and fully exhibited in the flesh, then the ground upon which this Covenant was given, being ceased, the covenant also ceaseth. Therefore for any man to go about to defend a covenant in the flesh, it is a doctrine virtually denying, that Christ is come and fully manifested in the flesh."[86]

Distinct from this covenant, though related to it, the covenant of grace had been made with believers throughout history. Patient's primary argument for this is that all of the promises of the covenant of grace run through Christ, thus only by virtue of union with him by faith, can one participate in the promises of the covenant. Because "in Adam all dy" spiritual life could only be received through Christ in the covenant of grace.[87] Additionally, the Bible condemns unbelief as a sin and declares unbelievers to be under wrath. If this is the state of the unbelieving, Patient argued, then they are not in the covenant of grace.[88]

The final section of Patient's book dealt with various biblical passages commonly used to justify his opponents' position. Patient argued that the promise in Acts 2:39 is the promise of new life and forgiveness offered to all, but it depends on God's election and effectual calling, as it always had.[89] He argued that I Corinthians 7:14 cannot teach that

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[84] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 83.

[85] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 84-88.

[86] This is similar to Coxe, Kiffen, and Knollys' fourth argument. Cf. Coxe, Kiffin, Knollys, *A Declaration*, 13-14.

[87] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 95.

[88] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 96-97.

[89] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 101-105.

children are holy in the sense of the new covenant because the only holiness granted by that covenant is a saving holiness of regeneration. Rather, Paul was assuring the Corinthians that they did not need to put away their wives as in the time of Ezra. Their marriages were lawful, thus their children were lawful.[90] In response to an argument from Romans 11:16-17, Patient replied that among one outward covenanting people, Israel was under a national covenant of works while some of them were under a spiritual covenant of grace at the same time. Each possessed a holiness, typical or spiritual, corresponding to the covenants in view. Thus in the context of Paul's argument in Romans 11, the national covenant had been abrogated, and there was no longer any other basis for the unity of God's people but faith.[91]

Patient also addressed an argument from I Corinthians 10:1-3 that stated that the Israelites experienced and participated in the same blessings as the New Testament church. He countered that such a conclusion failed to take typology into account. In a manner similar to John Cameron, Patient argued that the election and redemption of Israel, its promised land and life, and its sacrificial system were pictures of a greater reality, distinct from the types themselves.[92] This is a consistent hermeneutic in comparison with Patient's covenant theology, given that all along he had been stating that the outward national covenant was a typical covenant that foreshadowed greater and separate blessings. And, as previously laid out in his covenant theology, this in no way divested the Old Testament of salvation because the new covenant was announced from the fall onward and ran through the old covenant.[93] Patient simply distinguished the type from the antitype on a substantial level, rather than a purely external level.

Patient briefly discussed Matthew 19:13 and Mark 10:13, asserting that Christ's blessing of the children must be united with the statement that one must be like those children in order to enter the kingdom. Fully granting that children can and do believe the gospel, Patient asserted that it is the state of being like a child in dependence and trust that is in view in those passages.[94]

The last portion of the Bible addressed by Patient was Galatians 4 and the analogy of the two mothers and the two covenants. The context of this discussion is important.

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[90] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 105-110.

[91] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 110-119. "Therefore take the whole drift and scope of that place, and you shall have two seeds, two covenants, a certain select number out of those that were in the old Covenant, elected into the new covenant."

[92] Cf. "For their sacrifices for sin, typed out Christ, but they were not Christ, and their typical remissions…can be understood to be no other but typical." Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 125.

[93] Cf. "Duties performed from faith with an eye to Christ were then acceptable, when so performed, though ceremoniously, and such duties relating meerly to the covenant of works." Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 129.

[94] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 132-137.

Before bringing this passage into view, Patient replied to the objection that the difference between Abraham's covenant and the new covenant was "but a form of administration, that the Covenant of Grace was then administred in."[95] Though stating that he had already replied to this objection by distinguishing the covenant of circumcision, Patient rehearsed his arguments as illustrated by Galatians 4. There was a fleshly line under a covenant of works that for a time existed alongside a spiritual line under a covenant of grace. With the coming of Christ, the typical national covenant of works was abrogated and the spiritual offspring with its own covenant alone remained.[96] These were not two administrations of one covenant, but two covenants distinct in substance.

In conclusion, Thomas Patient advanced the Particular Baptists' covenant theology in two ways.[97] First, he dedicated a greater quantity of attention and detail to distinguishing the covenant of circumcision from the covenant of grace than previous authors had. Second, he posited that an external covenant of typical ceremonial worship had been instituted with Adam and his posterity, and that the later covenant of circumcision was merely an additional step in the progress of that one covenant of works. The Mosaic covenant alike was the same covenant. Patient said, "The Covenant that Moses was the Mediator of…was the covenant of Circumcision, which is before cleared to be a Covenant of works, delivered in substance to Abraham, but after committed by writing to Moses."[98]

It is difficult to determine the precise nature of Patient's view of God's dealings with Adam before the fall. While it is important to note the polemical style of the treatise, Patient repeatedly stated "That there is two Covenants held forth in Scripture." Neither of those two covenants, relative to Patient's discussion of them in this treatise, was a prelapsarian covenant. Nevertheless, Patient did state that "We know that Adam in his fall, did act sin as a publique person, in which all mankind are said to sin, Romans 5."[99] The language of a public person is the language of federal headship. Whether Patient accepted or rejected the term "covenant of works" relative to Adam, he taught that all mankind had fallen in Adam and bore his guilt and his nature.

Abraham Cheare and Robert Steed

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[95] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 139.

[96] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 140-145.

[97] Major Edward Warren, a member of the army in Ireland, replied to Patient soon afterward and stated that "T.P. is lookt upon as the chief in this moist clymate." Edward Warren, *Caleb's Inheritance in Canaan: By Grace, not Works, An Answer To a Book Entituled The Doctrine of Baptism, and the distinction of the Covenants* (London: George Sawbridge, 1655), iii of an unpaginated preface.

[98] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 121.

[99] Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 131.

While London was the central hub of Particular Baptist life, especially the Particular Baptists associated with the First London Confession of Faith, there were many Particular Baptist churches in other parts of England. In the late 1650s, Richard Ballamy,[100] a member of a Particular Baptist church in Tiverton, left the Particular Baptists to rejoin the paedobaptists. Several meetings were held in order to prevent his departure, and eventually he was excommunicated for unrepentant error. In 1657, Ballamy published a book entitled *The Leper Clensed*[101] in which he strongly criticized the Baptists' beliefs and practices, accusing them not only of theological error but also of formalism and loose living. One year later, two Baptist pastors from the area who had been involved in the meetings that preceded Ballamy's departure, Abraham Cheare (1626-March 5, 1668)[102] of Plymouth and Robert Steed (d.1699?)[103] of Dartmouth, published a response entitled *A Plain Discovery Of The Unrighteous Judge and False Accuser*.[104] While dealing with all of

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[100] Also spelled Ballamie.

[101] Richard Ballamie, *The Leper Clensed, or the Reduction of an Erring Christian. Being a Narrative of Richard Ballamie of Tiverton his falling off to Anabaptism and of his returning to the Truth, with the causes and occasions of both* (London: Francis Eglesfield, 1657).

[102] On Cheare, see Brian L. Hanson and Michael A. G. Haykin, *Waiting on the Spirit of Promise: The Life and Theology of Suffering of Abraham Cheare* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014). Abraham, born to John and Joane, was baptized as an infant on May 28, 1626. Raised in the trade of his father, a fuller, Cheare was not educated in a university. In 1648 he came to credobaptist convictions, was baptized, and the same year became pastor of the Particular Baptist church in Plymouth. Under the Restoration, Cheare was imprisoned for his nonconformity in 1661, 1662, 1663, and 1665 when he was exiled for life to Drake's Island where he died on March 5, 1668.

[103] Robert Steed was the son of Thomas and Elizabeth Steed, the fifth of at least nine children. His birthdate is unknown, as is his birthplace, though his father lived in Abingdon at the time of his death. Thomas' will, proved 20 January, 1655, does not list an occupation, though he owned some land and property. TNA PROB 11/243/302 Will of Thomas Steed. Robert's uncle, also named Robert, was an Oxford graduate (B.A. St John's, Dec 1609, M.A. July, 1613) and church of England minister serving as the vicar of Lamberhurst, Kent from 1623 until he was ejected in 1662. See A. G. Matthews, *Calamy Revised* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), 461. In his will, proved 18 November, 1663, Robert, the uncle, gave "Halfe of my Studdy of Books" to Robert. Robert was married and had at least one daughter, as evidenced by the uncle's will which gave "to his daughter if she be living then or any child of the said Robert Steede fifty pounds within three yeares after my decease." TNA PROB 11/312/361 Will of Robert Steede. Robert Steed served as a minister in Baptist churches for many years, working in the Dartmouth area in the later 1650s and early 1660s. By at least 1680 he had left the Church in Dartmouth. Cf. John Russel, *A Brief Narrative of some Considerable Passages Concerning the First Gathering, and further Progress of a Church of Christ, in Gospel-Order, in Boston in New-England* (London: J.D., 1680), 1. At some point he relocated to London and in 1692 he succeeded Hanserd Knollys as minister of the Broken Wharf church, moving its meeting location to Bagnio Court. The records of this church from the time Steed took over and beyond his death (c.1699) are found in the "Cripplegate Baptist Church Minute Book" held in the Angus Library of Regent's Park College, Oxford. Portions of these records are transcribed in Kreitzer, *William Kiffen and his World*, IV:275-293.

[104] Abraham Cheare and Robert Steed, *A Plain Discovery Of The Unrighteous Judge and False Accuser* (London: Henry Mortlock, 1658).

Ballamy's accusations, Cheare and Steed dedicated a substantial portion of this work to covenant theology.

Ballamy's covenantal argument was twofold. First, "That the Covenant of grace, stands now in force to the children of believers under the Gospell." And second, "That this is a sufficient ground by Gods appointment, why the children of believers should be baptized."[105] Cheare and Steed replied with a lengthy discussion of the precise meaning of the words Ballamy was using. They clarified that the covenant of grace can be defined either "in its own nature, singly, and universally considered" or "the manner of administration, according to divine institution."[106]

Cheare and Steed argued that in the first sense the covenant of grace refers to "That great mystery of the mercy of God in Christ, wherein the Father hath…given unto him a blessed seed of the Sons of Men, to be by him, and with him heires of the glorious inheritance of the grace of God…against all possibilities of miscarriage."[107] The covenant, in this sense, was "first published to man in paradice," repeated by the prophets throughout the Old Testament, and is "one and the same immutable from everlasting to everlasting."[108] They argued that it was this very covenant that "at sundry times, and after divers manners under divers signes, figures, and types, by promises and prophecies was renewed and ratified with the blessed Patriarches."[109] In other words, it was the covenant through which all believers at all times in all ages were saved. The covenant of grace under this first sense has "one Spiritual Father, which is Christ…and one spiritual seed."[110] Its membership is coextensive with election.

Passing to the second definition, Cheare and Steede stated that the covenant of grace refers to "the whole and every part of that instituted worship, whereby God doth ordinarily bring about, the purposes of the everlasting Covenant, that is…to gather to [Christ] the seed given him by his Father."[111] While the covenant of grace in the previous sense did not change, "the Covenant of grace under this acceptation…hath passed under many great alterations and changes…distinguished in Scripture, under two known heads…before the ascension of the Son of God, and the season which followed after."[112]

Up until this point, there is almost no hint of any departure from standard paedobaptist covenant theology. As expressed in the Westminster Confession, the singular immutable substance of the covenant of grace includes all the elect and the elect

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[105] Ballamy, *The Leper Clensed*, 6.

[106] Cheare and Steed, *A Plain Discovery*, 8.

[107] Cheare and Steed, *A Plain Discovery*, 8-9.

[108] Cheare and Steed, *A Plain Discovery*, 9.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Cheare and Steed, *A Plain Discovery*, 10.

alone. But the administration of the covenant has a historical aspect, and a wider reach. At this point, Cheare and Steed's covenant theology opened itself to misinterpretation and a lack of clarity. Their later statements must be studied carefully in order to obtain a clearer picture of their views.

They identified the pre-messianic administration of the covenant of grace with the entire time from Adam to Christ, but acknowledged that it was with circumcision and the later Mosaic ordinances that this administration took formal shape. The old administration was "the old Covenant, or the first Covenant…It is also usually called the law."[113] This caused potential confusion because on the one hand the old covenant is an administration of the covenant of grace, but on the other hand it was its own covenant. This old covenant was "appointed for the time being to minister to the everlasting Covenant, and then to be utterly cast out of the Church, together with the seed according to the flesh."[114] Cheare and Steed were arguing that within a historical administration, there were two dogmatically different covenants, "the bondage Covenant, and the free Covenant…that is, the law and the Gospel."[115] While these two covenants ran together for a time, when Christ came "There ended that Covenant; there expired…the force and authority upon which that administration stood."[116]

It would be very easy for an unsympathetic or rigid paedobaptist reader to take this as muddled paedobaptist federalism. But Cheare and Steed held to the common model of Particular Baptist covenant theology. They clarified that "the Covenant of the law, and the covenant made with *Abraham*…had in them an eminent renovation, and ratification of the everlasting covenant; yet were both of one and the same nature, authority and use."[117] The old covenant, which included Abraham's and Moses' covenants, was a legal covenant of works that ran in family lines and was designed to last for a time, making the covenant of grace known through its typology. The old covenant was "a covenant ministering or serving to [a] doctrine above or beyond it self."[118] This was the common two-tiered typology and covenantal subservience seen in previous Baptist writers.[119]

Turning to the second administration of the covenant of grace, "usually called the new covenant" they argued that it "was altogether of another nature to that which went before

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[113] Ibid.

[114] Cheare and Steed, *A Plain Discovery*, 11. They used Galatians 4 to make this point.

[115] Ibid.

[116] Cheare and Steed, *A Plain Discovery*, 12.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Cheare and Steed, *A Plain Discovery*, 13.

[119] Later they called the old administration "a typical, temporary, bondage-covenant" which "in a figure it ministred unto the ends of the everlasting covenant." Cheare and Steed, *A Plain Discovery*, 20.

it."[120] It was the complete unveiling of that which had been present and presented in the old covenant all along.

Returning to Ballamy's arguments, Cheare and Steed contended that the covenant of grace, in either sense of the term, did not automatically include the children of believers.[121] As to its singular immutable substance, the covenant of grace did not pass through family lines. As to its instituted ordinances, there was no command for baptizing the children of believers in the second administration, the new covenant. Here they reinforced their argument, insisting on the positive institution of baptism. "The ordinance of Baptism, is a part of the instituted worship of the Gospel, and all the force and authority that it hath upon the Conscience in point of practise, is to be derived from the plain and express law and word of God."[122]

The full picture of Cheare and Steed's covenant theology reflects standard Particular Baptist hermeneutics, structure, and conclusions. But their way of expressing their views was unhelpful. They called the old covenant an administration of the covenant of grace. Yet it was a distinct covenant of another nature from the covenant of grace. Without careful attention to detail and without familiarity with Particular Baptist covenant theology, some of their views are difficult to distinguish from the common language of paedobaptist covenant theology.

The problem lies in the language of substance and administration, particularly the language of administration. To say that the covenant of grace is one in substance throughout history is a dogmatic statement. It forms the united backbone of all Reformed covenant theology, paedobaptist or Baptist. Salvation is one and the same, and always has been. But the language of administration was not used with such simple clarity.

In some uses, administrations indicate time periods commonly referred to as the law and the gospel. In this language, even a Particular Baptist could, and certainly would, say that the salvific benefits of the singular covenant of grace were made available before and after Christ's earthly ministry. In this sense, the old and new administrations refer to time periods within which the same salvation was made available. The covenant was

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[120] Ibid.

[121] Though infants could be saved. Cf. "The Covenant of Grace is always in force to the elect as such, called or uncalled, infants or aged." Cheare and Steed, *A Plain Discovery*, 15.

[122] Ibid. Like Coxe, Kiffen, Knollys, Patient, and others, Cheare and Steed stood on this ground against consequential arguments for infant baptism. Later they stated, "It is no small comfort to us, that in a day of so much contradiction, envy and detraction…hitherto we have never been pressed by any one argument, which doth pretend to an institution of Christ, or any Apostle but by certain far-fetcht reasons from *Abrahams* carnal seed, and from circumcision, and suppositions of strange inconveniencies imagined by men, to follow the denyal of infant-baptism, and such like matters; and indeed being tried, are found suppositions, and nothing else." Cheare and Steed, *A Plain Discovery*, 37-38. They add, "We dare not presume in point of practise in instituted worship, to depart from a plaine known rule, to follow uncertain suppositions." Cheare and Steed, *A Plain Discovery*, 78.

"administered" in the sense of giving something to someone, like administering medicine. There is a dogmatic continuity of salvific benefits through a basic historical shift. Particular Baptists and paedobaptists would agree on these truths.

But in other uses, the administration refers to positively instituted ordinances. The administration is the way things are done or put in place. In the paedobaptists' model, they argued that the ordinances of the old covenant and the new were simply two outward sets representing the same realities. They were two administrations. Thus the covenant of grace had two outward visible forms, national Israel and the New Testament church. The change was one of quantity and clarity.

When two-tiered Cameronian typology is introduced into this arrangement, but the same language is used, confusion abounds.[123] The Particular Baptists saw the old covenant ordinances as serving an earthly national purpose while at the same time pointing beyond themselves to separate heavenly trans-national purposes. Thus, if they speak of an old covenant administration, they likely mean that the old covenant ordinances were a means through which salvific benefits were made known and obtained by the elect. But they do not mean that those old covenant ordinances belonged to the covenant of grace in and of themselves. Surely this is less confusing in the previous authors because they tended to avoid the language of substance and administration, or they explicitly rejected the paedobaptist model. Cheare and Steed did not use this language with clarity.

Cheare and Steed's book marks a historical point before a great numerical decline in Particular Baptist publications. The cause of this decline was not restricted to the Particular Baptists alone. The restoration of Charles II and the Clarendon code wreaked havoc on all nonconformity.[124] But when the polemical pens renewed their debates, Cheare and Steed's choice of words continued to affect the Particular Baptists.[125]

Conclusion

The authors presented in this chapter were subscribers of the First London Baptist Confession of Faith, or closely connected to it.[126] In their covenantal polemic, the

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[123] Cheare and Steed did not appeal to Cameron, but their typological hermeneutic was the same, as with the other Particular Baptists. The old covenant was a national covenant subserving the covenant of grace, looking away and beyond itself to something other and greater than itself.

[124] For more on the effect of the Clarendon Code, see the next chapter.

[125] See the next chapter. Edward Hutchinson echoed Cheare and Steed, while Thomas Delaune quoted sections of their book. Joseph Whiston attacked the lack of clarity in the language.

[126] Cheare and Steed quoted article XLVII of the 1LCF to contradict Ballamy's accusations about their views on the civil magistrate. Cf. Cheare and Steed, *A Plain Discovery*, 44. Robert Steed later pastored Hanserd Knollys' church. Additional authors who signed the confession made similar or identical

Particular Baptists sought to convince fellow Puritans to abandon unscriptural traditions in the church. In an attempt to demonstrate unity with Protestant Reformed theology, the First London Confession of Faith avoided polemical concerns and focused on the unity and exclusivity of salvation in the new covenant in Christ throughout history.

Benjamin Coxe, William Kiffen, and Hanserd Knollys narrowed their covenantal arguments to specific debate points and did not engage the literature of the Reformed tradition directly. But they did appeal to the Puritan Reformed insistence on limiting all religious worship to scriptural commands. They also stressed the Adam-Christ connection to the law and the gospel in order to expose logical inconsistency in the inclusion of infants in the covenant of grace, appealing to Reformed theology to substantiate their point. For Coxe, Kiffen, and Knollys, aspects of paedobaptist models of the covenant of grace were at odds with Reformed soteriology. To the Baptists, their covenant theology brought harmony and internal consistency to this tension.

Thomas Patient delved into exegesis on a more detailed level than previous authors, insisting that the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants were based on law, not gospel, though they made the gospel known. For Patient, the fact that there are two substantially opposed covenants and the fact that the Israelite covenants are identified by the law necessarily eroded the common paedobaptist covenant theology that reduced the old and new covenants to two outward forms of the same covenant. Patient, like his predecessors, argued that a place in the covenant of grace could only be obtained by a direct connection to Christ, which meant that one was free from condemnation in Adam. For Patient, Reformed theology itself prohibited natural inclusion of infants in the covenant of grace.

Abraham Cheare and Robert Steed taught the same Particular Baptist model of covenant theology, but utilized confusing language. Their desire was to defend themselves against accusation in the context of proving their orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Cheare and Steed affirmed that the benefits of salvation in the covenant of grace were obtained and enjoyed throughout the Old Testament. By using the language of their opponents' model to teach their own they created confusion.

Despite not obtaining the recognition they desired through their Confession and publications, the Particular Baptists persevered. The 1640s and 1650s were a time of

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arguments to those presented in this chapter. Cf. Edward Harrison, *Pædo-Baptisme oppugned* (London: n.p., 1646), 8, 14; Paul Hobson, *The Fallacy of Infants Baptisme Discovered. Or, Five Arguments, to prove that Infants ought not to be baptized* (London, 1645); Thomas Kilcop, *Ancient and Durable Gospel* (London: H.H., 1648); John Mabbatt, *A Briefe or Generall Reply, Unto Mr. Knuttons Answers unto the VII Questions About the Controversie between the Church of England, and The Separatist and Anabaptists Briefly Discussed* (1645); Samuel Richardson, *Divine Consolations;* Richardson, *Justification By Christ Alone, A Fountaine of life and comfort* (London: M.S., 1647), Richardson, *The Saints Desire; Or A Cordiall for a fainting soule. Declaring that in Christs righteousnesse onely, (and in nothing else) there is life, happinesse, peace, strength, comfort, joy, and all fullnesse of perfection* (London: M. Simmons, 1647), Richardson, *Some brief Considerations On Doctor Featley his Book, intituled, The Dipper Dipt* (London, 1645).

numerical growth and territorial expansion during the freedoms afforded by the Independents' influence and control in England and Ireland. Throughout this time, a core model of Particular Baptist covenant theology developed. The covenant of grace was a covenant of sure salvation for all of God's elect. The covenant of circumcision was a covenant of works for Abraham's physical descendants intended to set them apart as the people from whom the promised seed of the woman would be born. The old covenant made salvation known through typology, though the types are distinct from the antitype. When Christ was born, the national covenant of works was abrogated and the new covenant remained alone, the antitype eclipsing the type. From Ritor to Cheare and Steed, the Particular Baptists presented a united but diversely presented covenant theology.

Chapter Four: Second Kings and Confessions (1660-1679)

Introduction

During the second half of the 1640s and into the 1650s the Particular Baptists enjoyed a measure of freedom and growth. The influence of the Independents gave them freedom, and their participation in the Parliamentary Army provided a means of geographical influence and dispersal. They did not receive the recognition and validation they sought in the theological world, nevertheless during the Commonwealth and under the oversight of Cromwell the Baptists had increased and established themselves in England and Ireland. With Cromwell's death in 1658 and his son's successive failure, the door was opened wide for upheaval. Charles II returned to England in 1660, was crowned the year after, and a complete reversal of the past two decades was soon effected.

In the religious sphere, the seeds of dissent that had been planted in the first four decades of the seventeenth century blossomed into distinct groups. Where there had been one church, the Church of England, many estranged theological children now resided. As Liza Picard put it, "The Church of England, headed by the monarch, lost its position with his head."[1] Following the execution of Charles I, the Westminster Assembly had intended to take up the mantle of national uniformity through its confessional and catechetical standards, but the power of the Independents in parliament, particularly due to Cromwell, neutered these efforts.[2] In this arena of relative freedom, the Baptists had grown.

When Charles II returned to England, he gave dissenters some hope for toleration in the Declaration of Breda in 1660. But in the following years, a series of Acts passed by Parliament, often known as the Clarendon Code, squandered all hopes of toleration for nonconformity. In 1661, the Corporation Act required all public officials to take communion in the Church of England. In 1662, the Act of Uniformity required all

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[1] Liza Picard, *Restoration London* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 263.

[2] The simplest proof of this is the difference between the Confession submitted to Parliament by the Westminster Assembly, and the Articles that Parliament finally approved. Cf. *The humble Advice of the Assembly of Divines, Now by Authority of Parliament sitting at Westminster, Concerning a Confession of Faith, with the Quotations and Texts of Scripture annexed. Presented by them lately to both Houses of Parliament* (London: Company of Stationers, 1647). Cf. also *Articles of Christian Religion Approved and Passed by both Houses of Parliament After Advice had with the Assembly of Divines by Authority of Parliament sitting at Westminster* (London: Edward Husband, 1648). Chapters XXX and XXXI were omitted, and changes were made to chapters XX and XXIV. Furthermore, the Presbyterians had accomplished the passing of the Blasphemy Act in Parliament in May 1648. This act legalized the execution of heretics and atheists, as well as the imprisonment of sectaries such as the Baptists. But the Independents purged Parliament soon after and set up the Rump Parliament in its place which prevented the Blasphemy Act from being fully realized.

religious services to use the Book of Common Prayer. In 1664, the Conventicle Act prohibited any religious gathering of more than five people that were not of the same household. And in 1665, the Five Mile Act, also known as the Oxford Act, forbade nonconformist ministers from living within five miles of a parish from which they had been expelled. On 24 August, 1662, later known as Black Bartholomew's Day, more than 2,000 ministers refused to take oaths of uniformity and left their livings in the Church of England. These laws brought about a "decisive breach between Episcopacy and Nonconformity."[3] The return of the monarchy was likewise the return of the prelacy.

Whether, Presbyterian, Independent, or Baptist, they were in the same boat now. Suppression and persecution were shared all around. The Particular Baptists, originally founded on zealous Puritan dissent, were no strangers to ejection or the treatment they soon experienced. Despite their declarations of submission and allegiance to the newly crowned King, and despite their attempts to distance themselves from radical events like Venner's Rebellion in 1661, the Baptists suffered greatly.[4] Many Baptist ministers and congregants were imprisoned. Property was confiscated. Fines were imposed. Some Baptists fled the country.[5] Nonconformist publication and public debate decreased considerably.

The 1660s proved especially terrifying when plague and fire ravaged London. One source recorded 68,596 plague deaths in 1665, increasing the annual death toll in London from an average of around 20,000 to 97,336.[6] Restoration, rebellion, persecution, plague, fire, and uniformity wreaked havoc on England. If the 1640s were tumultuous but optimistic, the 1660s were tumultuous but pessimistic. It is unsurprising, then, that it was not until the 1670s that the Particular Baptists resumed writing on covenant theology. And even then, their publications were fewer in number than the previous decades.

Edward Hutchinson

In the 1660s, the quiet stillness of the battlefield of infant baptism and covenant theology was not the result of victory on either side but a common persecuting enemy. The stillness was disrupted and the conflict commenced afresh in 1673 when Henry Danvers (b. in or

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[3] Macalpine, "A.D. 1662 - Uniformity or Unity?," 111-116.

[4] Anon., *The Humble Apology of some commonly called Anabaptists* (London: Henry Hills, 1660). On the Particular Baptists struggles under Charles II see Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, II.

[5] Hanserd Knollys went to Holland and then to Germany for a few years. Cf. Bustin, *Paradox and Perseverance*, 171-191.

[6] R. Clavell, *The General Catalogue of Books Printed in England* (London: S. Roycroft, 1680), 36. Thomas Patient, covered in chapter 3, died of the plague during this time.

before 1619–1687/8),[7] a Fifth Monarchist and General Baptist, published *A Treatise of Baptism*.[8] In his book, Danvers dealt with arguments from positive law and covenant theology, but made no new contributions in those areas.

He gathered significant attention, however, by making a historical case that infant baptism had begun several centuries after the establishment of the apostolic church, based on the belief that the event of baptism washed away sins. Danvers asserted that Infant baptism became a part of the church's tradition and was carried onward by the growing papal-led church.[9] Richard Baxter, Obadiah Wills, Giles Firmin (1614-1697), and Richard Blinman (1615-1687) opposed Danvers, among others, sparking a chain of back-and-forth publications.[10]

Into the reignited debate, in a climate still stifled by Stuart monarchy, Edward Hutchinson (d. c. 1677)[11] cast his arguments in a book. Little is known of Hutchinson, though Crosby, who called him "learned and ingenious,"[12] claimed he was a pastor of a congregation in Ormond, Ireland.[13] In 1676, Hutchinson said that he had been among the Baptist churches "these six and twenty years."[14]

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[7] Greaves, 'Danvers, Henry (b. in or before 1619, d. 1687/8)', *ODNB*. Danvers is sometimes spelled D'anvers.

[8] Henry Danvers, *A Treatise of Baptism. Wherein That of Believers, and that of Infants, is examined by the Scriptures; with the History of both out of Antiquity: making it appear, that Infants Baptism was not practiced for near 300 years after Christ, &c.* (London: Francis Smith, 1673), 203.

[9] Danvers, *A Treatise of Baptism*, 107-202.

[10] Prominent Particular Baptists weighed in on the accuracy of Danvers' historical assertions, acknowledging some errors on his part. Cf. Anon., *The Baptists Answer to Mr. Obed. Wills, his Appeal against Mr. H. Danvers* (n.p., 1675). The answer, dated the 13th of the 5th month, 1675, was given by Hanserd Knollys, William Kiffen, Daniel Dyke, John Gosnold, Henry Forty, and Thomas Delaune.

[11] Thomas Delaune, Hutchinson's son-in-law, said in 1677 that Hutchinson was "now with the Lord." Thomas Delaune, *Truth Defended: Or, A Triple Answer to the late Triumvirates Opposition in their Three Pamphlets, Viz. Mr. Baxter's Review, Mr. Wills his Censure, Mr. Whiston's Postscript to his Essay, &c.* (London: Francis Smith, 1677), xv of a second unpaginated preface.

[12] Crosby, *The History of the English Baptist*, I:241. Crosby was quoting Benjamin Stinton. Cf. Stinton, *Repository*, 81.

[13] Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, II: 366.

[14] Edward Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant and Baptism Dialogue-wise, between a Baptist & a Poedo-Baptist, Wherein is shewed, That Believers only are the Spirituall Seed of Abraham; Fully discovering The Fallacy of the Argument drawn from the Birth Priviledge* (London: Francis Smith, 1676), v of an unpaginated preface. It would seem that he was converted to the Particular Baptists' cause around 1650 in Ireland. His name appears with other prominent Particular Baptists in two documents in the early 1650s. In January, 1652, he signed a letter with Thomas Patient and others from the Baptist church in Waterford to another Baptist church in Dublin. In a letter from the Irish churches to the London churches, dated 1653, Hutchinson signed as one working "sometimes" in Clonmell. Kreitzer, *William Kiffen and his World*, II:218, 228. The letters are transcribed there.

As Hutchinson introduced his book, he took note of Danvers' work, and Baxter's and Wills' replies. Hutchinson entered this flurry of literature with a concern for the theology of baptism rather than the hotly debated history of it. In a preface, T.D., probably Hutchinson's son-in-law Thomas Delaune, said, "The subject of the Covenant…hath not hitherto been so singly insisted upon as 'tis here; although it has been cleared sufficiently…*by Mr Blackwood*, *Tombs*, *Laurence*, *Danvers*, &c."[15] Hutchinson saw a need to take up the torch and carry it forward.

The style of his work was different from most other Baptist books on covenant theology. It was written as a dialogue between two friends, a "pœdobaptist" and a Baptist.[16] At the outset, the focus of Hutchinson's polemic was clearly set on the Abrahamic covenant. The paedobaptist said, "If you can remove [doubts concerning the Abrahamic covenant], I resolve to be of your opinion." The Baptist replied, "Its true, the Covenant or promise made to *Abraham*, and to his seed, is the great hinge or Engine upon which the whole business of *Infants-Baptism* moves."[17]

Hutchinson's first four arguments were aimed at identifying the seed of Abraham. He argued first that the children of Abraham are only those who do the works of Abraham, citing John 8:39. The children of believers did not automatically do his works, i.e., believe, thus they were not his children. He argued secondly that only those who belong to Christ are the seed of Abraham, citing Galatians 3:3, 19. While ceding that some infants belong to Christ by election, Hutchinson asserted that the text referred to those who are his by calling. Third, he argued that only those who have faith are blessed with Abraham, citing Galatians 3:9. But infants do not have faith, thus they are not his seed. Fourthly, he argued that if the children of the flesh are not the children of God, then infants are not the seed of Abraham, citing Romans 9:8.[18]

Turning to Acts 2:39, Hutchinson queried whether the promise referred to was the covenant of salvation, or access to the outward ordinances. If it were the promise of salvation, it was absolute or conditional. If absolute, then all are saved. If conditioned on faith and repentance, "then we are agreed: and the controversy is ended."[19] The paedobaptist countered that it was "the promise of outward ordinance, as to be baptized,

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[15] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, xix of an unpaginated preface. For more on Delaune, see below. Laurence is Henry Lawrence (1600-1665). Cf. Henry Lawrence, *Of Baptisme* (Rotterdam, 1646; 2nd edition, London, 1659).

[16] The odd spelling, "pœdobaptist," which does not appear in the OED as a variant, may have been a printer's error. But it appears clearly in the title of the book and is used consistently throughout the book to denote the paedobaptist dialogue partner.

[17] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 3.

[18] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 3-4.

[19] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 5-6.

&c."[20] For Hutchinson's Baptist, this was a poor promise and no real comfort to the hearers of Peter's sermon. He rejected the idea of an outward covenant to believers' children based on the fact that the new covenant "is not the same, with that of the law…That being of an *Earthly*, this of an *heavenly* inheritance."[21] He concluded, "whatever can be said of the Covenant, the promise, the holy seed; is only this, they were Typical, ceremonial, abiding only to the time of Reformation…all these belonging to a first Covenant which was faulty."[22]

The Israelites, though the children of an earthly covenant, were greatly privileged because to them belonged "both Testaments, the Type, and the Anti-type…that not only of the Earthly *Canaan*, but of the Gospel Covenant…not in respect of any right they had to it by birth…but…in respect of the first tenders of it."[23] In other words, the covenant of grace was distinct from the old covenant, but was made known in the old covenant. There were two seeds of Abraham, one natural belonging to the old covenant, another supernatural belonging to the new covenant. When Christ came, the old covenant was abrogated, the unbelieving natural seed was cast out, and none but believers could lay claim to being the seed of Abraham.

For Hutchinson this was sufficient to end the debate, but he continued and examined Genesis 17. Here he closely resembled Abraham Cheare and Robert Steed. He said,

> The Covenant of grace is to be considered, either of the promise of eternal life and salvation, made to all the elect in Christ, the which remains one and the same in all ages, though variously administred, in the times of the old and new Testament. Or else of the manner of its Administration, in which sence, its now (in respect of the old Testament administration) which was a distinct covenant in it self (for the time being) called the new Covenant.[24]

Hutchinson used this to argue that "its one thing to be in the Covenant of grace, *i.e.* to have a right to the promise, which is only proper to the elect: another thing, to be under the administration of the Covenant, which is common to the elect and reprobates, and depends meerly upon Gods appointment."[25]

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[20] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 6.

[21] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 11.

[22] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 12. By "Faulty" Hutchinson is referring to the old covenant's powerlessness to help its covenanters obey its laws, or to provide any kind of salvation.

[23] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 13.

[24] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 22-23.

[25] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 23.

Hutchinson contended that in the first sense the covenant never belonged to the children of believers, unless they were elect.[26] It had always been the same, "which promise had its first promulgation to *Adam*, in the garden of *Eden*."[27] Election was not the ground upon which the covenant was to be administered to anyone. "But the law of institution is the ground or reason of visible Administrations."[28] Thus, as Cheare and Steed had argued, if the substance of the covenant were the pattern for baptism, election would become the pattern. Both sides agreed that election did not universally include the children of believers, thus it could not be the pattern for baptism. And if the administration were the pattern for baptism, positive institution excluded infants because of the necessity of a profession of faith.

One of the most common arguments used by paedobaptists to prove that the Abrahamic covenant was the covenant of grace was an appeal to the covenantal formula in Genesis 17:7, "I will be your God, and you will be my people." Hutchinson rejected this as an oversimplification. To be God to a people was too general to conclude that a given covenant was the covenant of grace. He asserted that Abraham's paternity had two senses: father of his natural offspring, and father of those who believed as he did. God promised to be God to these seeds, but based on distinct promises. The fleshly seed received promises of blessed life in Canaan. And their part of the covenant was obedience to circumcision which obliged them to keep all ordinances, including those delivered by Moses. The believing offspring were promised an incorruptible and eternal inheritance, "of which the earthly inheritance in the land of *Canaan* was but a type."[29] The type "offered" the antitype to Israel, but it was only confirmed to the spiritual seed.

The typological nature of the promises of the old covenant meant that the covenant made with Abraham was "a mixt Covenant, consisting partly of promises of temporal blessings…and partly of promises of spiritual blessings."[30] To prove that specific promises pertained to particular people, Hutchinson quoted Galatians 3:16, 22 which delimited the scope of certain promises to Christ, and thus, by connection, to those united to Christ, "for there is no other way to partake of the promise but by faith in Christ."[31]

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[26] Cf. "So we say of Infants in the days of the Gospel, many of them are in the Covenant of grace, and so saved, by vertue of the free promise: But yet not to be baptised." Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 25.

[27] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 23.

[28] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 24.

[29] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 25-27.

[30] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 27.

[31] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 27-28. Cf. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 36. He said, "the promises running to Christ personally, God makes him over for a Covenant to the Elect, and all the promises in him…So that in *Christ* he is our God, and in *Christ*, he takes us to be his people. In *Christ*, and a right to the promises; out of *Christ*, and strangers to the Covenants of promise." Later he said that if these things were taken seriously, it "would put an end to the whole Controversy."

The necessity of union with Christ, Hutchinson argued, was definitive. It was "a full answer to all Arguments drawn from the Covenants, and the promise made to *Abraham*, and certainly and unavoidably cuts off Infants Church membership in the days of the Gospel."[32]

What happened next was a bold move. Though Particular Baptists often appealed to paedobaptists' own writings to argue that Baptist covenant theology was a consistent outworking of the same principles, Hutchinson announced an unexpected champion to prove his case. He appealed to "the judicious and eminent divine, Dr *Owen*," quoting to his own advantage a lengthy portion of John Owen's (1616-1683) sixth Exercitation on the oneness of the church in his commentary on the book of Hebrews.[33] Hutchinson was pleased with Owen's attention to distinctions of the promises and privileges given to Abraham and his seed. Owen said,

> Two priviledges did God grant unto Abraham…First, that according to the flesh, he should be the father of the Messiah; the promised seed…That this privilege was temporary, having a limited season…the very nature of the thing it self doth demonstrate. For upon the actual exhibition in the flesh it was to cease. In pursuit hereof, were his posterity separated from the rest of the world…that through them the promised seed might be brought forth…and be of them according to the flesh.[34]

The second privilege given to Abraham was "that his faith whereby he was personally interested in the Covenant, should be the pattern of the faith of the Church in all generations, and that none should ever come to be a member of it, or a sharer in its blessings, but by the same faith." Owen added that through this privilege, Abraham became "father of all them that believe…in that all that should believe throughout the world, being thereby implanted into the Covenant made with him, should become his spiritual children."[35]

This dual paternity resulted in a twofold seed. Owen continued,

> Answerable unto this twofold end of the separation of Abraham, there was a double seed allotted to him. A seed according to the flesh, separated to the bringing forth of the Messiah…and a seed according to the promise, that is, such as by faith have an interest in the promise, or all the elect of God.[36]

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[32] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 29.

[33] He quoted John Owen, *Exercitations on the Epistle to the Hebrews Also Concerning the Messiah…With an Exposition and Discourses on the Two First Chapters of the said Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Printed by Robert White, 1668), 55-56, 57.

[34] Owen, *Exercitations*, 55. Cf. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 29.

[35] Owen, *Exercitations*, 55. Cf. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 29-30.

[36] Owen, *Exercitations*, 55. Cf. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 30.

These seeds were intermingled in the old covenant. "Sometimes the same seed came under diverse considerations, being the seed of Abraham both according to the flesh and promise, and sometimes the seed it self was divers, those according to the flesh being not of the promise, and so on the contrary." The difference was faith. Those who believed "by their own personal faith were interested in the Covenant of Abraham." Those who did not believe were not "interested in the spiritual blessings of the Covenant, because they did not personally believe."[37]

In light of the authors and arguments covered in this treatise, it is clear why Hutchinson appealed to Owen. Dividing the seed of Abraham into his natural offspring, whose privilege was to cease at Christ's coming, and the elect who believe was the consistent argument of the Particular Baptists. Owen laid this out and declared it to be plain and straightforward.

But Owen did not simply espouse the principles advocated by the Particular Baptists. He even stated their conclusion. He said, "Now it is evident, that it is the second Priviledge and spiritual seed, wherein the Church to whom the Promises are made is founded, and whereof it doth consist, namely in them, who by faith are interested in the Covenant of Abraham, whether they be of the carnal seed or no."[38] Owen's words indicated that the Church consists of those who have actual faith and are thus interested in the promises. What more could the Particular Baptists want? But he continued.

Owen argued that John's and Jesus' rejection of the Jews' appeal to Abrahamic paternity and genealogy evidenced that the Jews had "no other Priviledge than Abraham had in the flesh," a privilege that ceased with the coming of Christ.[39] He added, "if they did not by faith in the promised seed attain an interest…it is evident that they could on no account be considered as actually sharers in the Covenant of God."[40] With the removal of the outward fleshly privilege, Owen concluded that "The Church unto whom all the *Promises* belong, are only those who are Heirs of *Abrahams* Faith; believing as he did, and thereby interested in his Covenant."[41]

Hutchinson chirped happily,

> So far this learned man, whose words need no comment, nor need we draw any inference, but recite his bare words, which are both perspicuous and Orthodox; clearly and fully evidencing our position, *That believers only are the children of* Abraham, *and none but such have an Interest in the Covenant made with him*.[42]

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[37] Owen, *Exercitations*, 55. Cf. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 31.
[38] Owen, *Exercitations*, 55. Cf. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 31.
[39] Owen, *Exercitations*, 56. Cf. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 31-32.
[40] Owen, *Exercitations*, 56. Cf. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 32.
[41] Owen, *Exercitations*, 56. Cf. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 34.
[42] Cf. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 34.

Indeed, it is easy to see why Hutchinson spoke this way. John Owen, the former chaplain of Cromwell and Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, prolific author and theological titan, was advocating the Baptists' position. Or so Hutchinson claimed. He knew that there would be a backlash for this appropriation, and he said,

> And if our opponents think Dr. O. injured (as they are apt to clamour to that purpose) for our improvement of his words to our advantage…we say, that they are at liberty to reconcile his words to his practice if they can…The Dr. treating about the nature of the Covenant and promises made to *Abraham*, (and perhaps forgetting Infant-Baptism) opens and expounds them with such spirituality and Orthodoxy, as leaves no room for Infant-Baptism, but excludes it beyond all possibility of reconciliation.[43]

Hutchinson's glee is apparent. Having Owen as one's ally in a theological debate would grant a measure of legitimacy and validation to one's cause.

Hutchinson applied these truths to add specificity to God's dealings with Abraham. It was not enough to say that as God made a covenant with Abraham and his children, so also he made a covenant with believers and their children. Rather, the dual paternity and dual seeds of Abraham carefully sorted out which promises were made to which seeds. For Hutchinson, then, the covenant of circumcision was temporary and provided earthly blessings which were typical of spiritual blessings. When Christ came, the covenant of circumcision was dismantled, and all were called to join the household of faith which had been present all along.

Later, referring to the Abrahamic covenant, the paedobaptist asked, "what kind of Covenant was it?" Hutchinson's imaginary Baptist listed a variety of opinions. "Some say it was a Covenant of grace; others, a Covenant of works, others, a mixt Covenant." His own opinion was that the "Covenant of Circumcision, or Covenant of the Law was not the Covenant of Eternal life and salvation, which was made with all the elect in Christ upon the condition of faith: but a distinct Covenant of it self…and so may be called a Covenant of works."[44]

Here, Hutchinson offered a helpful qualification. Although he was calling the covenant of circumcision a covenant of works, he acknowledged that "there was also grace in it, as there was in all the Covenants that God ever made with men."[45] His denial of the term "covenant of grace" relative to the covenant of circumcision was not a denial that it was a gracious action from God. It simply wasn't the covenant of saving grace.

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[43] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 34-35.

[44] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 93.

[45] Ibid.

Echoing Cheare and Steed again, Hutchinson invoked the tricky categories of substance and administration. He said, "And if you say the Covenant of grace was the same in all ages under various administrations, we confess it, and say that the Covenant of grace was made to *Adam* after the fall, to the *Patriarchs*, and to *Abraham*, before the Covenant of Circumcision was mentioned, and is the same to us now."[46] Though it sounds like he was adopting the paedobaptists' covenant theology, Hutchinson's point was dogmatic. Through various outward historical changes, the same salvific benefits were appropriated by the elect through the ages. The covenant of circumcision, however, was not the covenant of grace.

To explain why the covenant of works is called the old covenant, Hutchinson gave three reasons. First, because of priority. It was the first covenant God made with man. He said, "as Protestant Divines say; that God made a Covenant of works with *Adam*, concerning perfect obedience, which he had then power to perform. And some think God renewed this Covenant of works after the fall." Hutchinson held that this covenant of works was "renewed to *Abraham*, and his posterity."[47] Second, it was called the old covenant because it was faulty. And third, it was so called because it decayed and perished.

The covenant of grace was called the new covenant for four reasons. First, for its "meliority," or "betterness." Second, in opposition to the old. Third, for its "perpetuity and duration." And fourth, because to New Testament believers it is "renewed in a more Gospel and glorious manner."[48] These reasons qualify any thought that Hutchinson's previous use of the substance/administration formula aligned him with the paedobaptists.

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[46] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 93-94.

[47] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 94. This is anticipatory of later views expressed by Particular Baptists like Philip Cary and Benjamin Keach. See chapter seven. There is no mention or indication that Hutchinson held that eternal life was promised in these renewals of the covenant of works. At every step in Hutchinson's thought, the Abrahamic covenant of works had only blessed life in Canaan in view.

[48] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 95. To confirm this opinion, Hutchinson appealed to John Humfrey (1621-1719). On Humfrey see E. C. Vernon, 'Humfrey, John (*bap.* 1621, *d.* 1719)', *ODNB*. Humfrey said, "The old Covenant was a political Covenant made with the Jews, as Princes compacts are with their people when they first set up Government." Humfrey described the typological character of Israel as "Types and representation of other things, that is to say spiritual, and so the law being a Pædagogy under a temporal dispensation, leading men to Christ." Humfrey, *The Middle-Way*, 17-19. Cf. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 95-96. Humfrey's view was similar to John Cameron's. He said, "Though their Law is not to be judged the Covenant of Works, or the Covenant of Grace…yet we may expect that it should *represent* both the one and the other to them." Humfrey, *The Middle-Way*, 18.

To no one's surprise, at the end of the dialogue the paedobaptist conceded, "Sir I thank you for this discourse…I confesse I finde my self more convinc'd then I was; and I do think you are of the surest side."[49] Perhaps it was John Owen who convinced him.

Hutchinson's work consisted of more than this dialogue. It contained several other sections dealing with various authors, one of which was aimed at Joseph Whiston (d.1690),[50] an Independent minister in Lewes, who had written a treatise in defense of infant baptism in 1670.[51] Whiston's book showed an uncommon familiarity with the Particular Baptists' writings. Though not naming the authors he consulted, he articulated their views specifically. He even pointed out that the Particular Baptists expressed themselves somewhat diversely, though ultimately holding the same doctrines.

Whiston first described the view that a twofold covenant was made with Abraham, "the one a Covenant of Grace, the other a legal or temporal Covenant," and that these two covenants related to *Abraham's* spiritual seed, i.e., believers, and his natural seed.[52] Others, he said, assert that "there was but one Covenant made with *Abraham*, and that was a mixt Covenant, consisting partly of spiritual, and partly of temporal Promises…so answerably the Seed of *Abraham* must be distinguished."[53] Despite these shades of difference, "yet they all agree in the general, that only temporal blessings did appertain to *Abraham's* natural Seed, as such, and that spiritual blessings were wholly or alone promised to…his spiritual or mystical seed." Whiston added, "and some add, that the Covenant, as consisting of temporal blessings, was…a Covenant typifying the Gospel Covenant."[54] Whiston's answer was that "there was but one Covenant established between God and *Abraham*, and his seed, and that was a Covenant of Grace, and the very same for substance that believers are now under."[55] In Whiston, Hutchinson was engaging a knowledgeable opponent who would continue to be a debate partner to the Particular Baptists until his death in 1690.

Hutchinson's critique of Whiston focused on the argument that children are visibly admitted to the covenant of grace. For Hutchinson, "there is no being in the Covenant of Grace, but by *Election* on Gods part; and *actual Faith* on Mans part."[56] A purely visible

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[49] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 106.

[50] On Whiston, see Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, 524.

[51] Joseph Whiston, *Infant-baptism From Heaven and not of Men* (London: Henry Million, 1670). Whiston published additional material under the same title in 1675 and in 1676, interacting with Henry Danvers' 1673 treatise.

[52] Whiston, *Infant-baptism From Heaven*, 178.

[53] Whiston, *Infant-baptism From Heaven*, 179.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Whiston, *Infant-baptism From Heaven*, 35. Cf. 180-181.

[56] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 28. The pagination resets with each section of this book.

membership, separated from internal invisible spiritual realities, was inconsistent with the nature of the covenant of grace. Hutchinson demanded greater precision on the meaning of visible membership in a covenantal context. He appealed again to Owen's commentary on Hebrews, citing the same section as in his dialogue, and reminded Whiston that the birth privilege of the Jews gave them no new covenant entitlement, even if only visibly.[57]

Another element Hutchinson discussed was the testamental nature of the covenant of grace. He denied that all covenants must be mutual, because the covenant of grace is a testamentary disposition. Appealing to William Ames and Edward Leigh, Hutchinson argued that "the properest expression is, to call it the *Testament of Grace*…for God doth hereby dispose, convey, and bestow all that *Grace* which may fit all his *Heirs* for his *Eternal* Glory."[58] In context, Hutchinson was arguing that the Abrahamic covenant cannot be the covenant of grace because it does not grant its blessings to its heirs freely and absolutely, like a testament, but rather requires obedience from them in order to enjoy its blessings. Testaments grant their inheritances to all involved. Not all of the children of Abraham received spiritual blessings, therefore his covenant could not be the covenant of grace.

Here also, Hutchinson used language liable to confusion. While denying that all covenants must be mutual, Hutchinson was not affirming that God's children are absolutely passive in the covenant of grace. Here and elsewhere he said that the "condition of Faith is still required of the Seed of Believers, and without it they have no interest in Christian Ordinances."[59] Pointing to mutuality as the difference between the Abrahamic covenant and the covenant of grace was focused on the placement of the guarantee of inheritance. In the Abrahamic covenant, the inheritance could be lost through disobedience. In the covenant of grace, the condition (faith) was promised and guaranteed just as much as the other blessings.

The distinction of the Abrahamic covenant from the covenant of grace was, as Hutchinson had said at the outset, "the great hinge" of the debate. To refute Whiston's argument that they were but one covenant, Hutchinson appealed to Owen's comments from Hebrews a third time. In Hutchinson's opinion, Owen's distinction and limitation of the seeds of Abraham into believers and Abraham's natural offspring was sufficient to end the debate. He stated boldly, "And therefore to produce Dr. *Owen* against Mr. *Whiston*, is a sufficient Confutation…therefore let Mr. *Whiston* either convince the *Doctor* if this be an error, or be convinced by him…Or let him reconcile that *Exercitation* to the practice of Baptizing Infants upon a *Fœderal* right."[60]

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[57] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 35-36.

[58] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 40.

[59] Ibid. Quoted above, Hutchinson had said "There is no being in the Covenant of Grace, but by *Election* on Gods part; and *actual Faith* on Mans part."

[60] Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 41-42. Hutchinson appealed to the same portion a fourth time. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 53.

To use Owen like this was quite bold. Owen's distinction and limitation of the seeds of Abraham may have supported the Particular Baptists' arguments, but Owen still considered the Abrahamic covenant to be the covenant of grace. Furthermore, Owen justified infant baptism specifically from the Abrahamic covenant. In a later volume of his work on Hebrews, Owen commented the following on Hebrews 6:2,

> There were two sorts of persons that were baptized, namely, those that were *adult* at their first hearing of the Gospel, and the *infant Children of Believers* who were admitted to be members of the Church…being received as a *part and branches* of a Family whereupon the blessing of *Abraham* was come, and to whom the *Promises of the Covenant* was extended.[61]

Despite the disparity, Hutchinson saw no need to reconcile the premises and the conclusions. As he had stated, "they are at liberty to reconcile his words to his practice if they can."

Whiston replied to Hutchinson that same year, lashing back at his use of Owen. Whiston said, "I should be justly censured as a very unworthy Man, should I wrest Authors words…to countenance my own sentiments in a contradiction to their known practice."[62] He added, "He [Owen] meddles not with the case of Infants, but supposeth them visibly in Covenant as the Seed of Parents visibly so; when will you leave thus to abuse Authors whose names are so precious in all the Churches of Christ?"[63] Neither Hutchinson nor Whiston saw the need to resolve the tension. Hutchinson considered Owen's views to be a contradiction. Whiston considered Hutchinson's use of Owen to be an abuse of his theology.[64]

In conclusion, Hutchinson's work supports a variety of observations. First, Hutchinson clearly espoused the common covenant theology of the Particular Baptists. The Abrahamic covenant was a national covenant of works for life in the land of Canaan. This covenant ceased with the establishment of the new covenant, removing any outward or genealogical privileges.

Second, Hutchinson's mention of the covenant of works held by "Protestant Divines" is another example, such as Christopher Blackwood, where the covenant of works is treated as a given. It was an assumption to Hutchinson, requiring no argumentation or defense.

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[61] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews* (London: Nathaniel Ponder, 1680), 32. On the following page, Owen used Mark 10:16 to show that Jesus "Owned *little Children* to belong to his Covenant."

[62] Joseph Whiston, *An Essay to Revive the Primitive Doctrine and Practice of Infant-Baptism* (London: Jonathan Robinson, 1676), 253.

[63] Whiston, *An Essay to Revive the Primitive Doctrine*, 253.

[64] For more on Owen, see chapter 5.

Third, Hutchinson's statement that the Abrahamic covenant was a renewal of the covenant of works is an expansion, or elaboration, of previous Particular Baptist covenant theology. Given the assumed nature of the Adamic covenant of works throughout the Particular Baptists' writings, when previous writers called the Abrahamic covenant a covenant of works without mentioning a covenant made with Adam, it is likely that Hutchinson's identification of the two is a fuller expression of what was already in place. Writers such as Philip Cary and Benjamin Keach developed this language in more detail in the 1690s.

Fourth, Hutchinson's use of the language of substance and administration was intended to communicate the continuity of salvation throughout history. This can be misleading because paedobaptists used this very manner of expression to say, at the same time, that the old and new covenants were the same covenant, a doctrine clearly rejected by Hutchinson. Hutchinson used it to identify and yet distinguish the covenant of grace in the Abrahamic covenant.

Fifth, Hutchinson's typology was the same as other authors covered in this work, and most closely resembles John Cameron's hermeneutics. The inheritance of Canaan was a picture of an inheritance of eternal life in Jesus Christ. This typology meant that the promises and blessings of the old covenant revealed and subserved the promises and blessings of the covenant of grace, though they were distinct from it.

Thomas Delaune

A year after Edward Hutchinson published his dialogue, Thomas Delaune (d.1685)[65] entered the fray. Born in county Cork, Ireland, Delaune was raised in a catholic family but converted to the Baptist cause through the influence of Major Edward Riggs, founder of Cork Baptist Church, who had provided for Delaune's education in his early years. Delaune's conversion to protestant and Baptist beliefs led to meeting Edward Hutchinson, whose daughter Hanna he married. They moved to London where Delaune provided for his family by running a grammar school and authoring books. One of his publications, *A Plea for Non-conformists*, arguing for liberty of conscience in religion, was viewed as seditious by the authorities who imprisoned Delaune and burned his books publicly in 1684.[66] His wife and two children joined him in prison where they all soon died, Thomas succumbing last of all in 1685.

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[65] On Delaune, sometimes spelled D'Laune, DeLaune or De Laune, see Haykin, 'Delaune, Thomas (*d.* 1685)', *ODNB*. Cf. also Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, II:366-379.

[66] Thomas Delaune, *A Plea for the Non-Conformists* (London: Printed for the Author, 1684). The famous Daniel Defoe reprinted this and two more of Delaune's books in 1706, adding his own preface to the collection. Cf. Daniel Defoe, *De Laune's Plea for the Non-Conformists…with a preface by the Author of the Review* (London: John Marshall, 1706). Defoe included the details of Delaune's arrest, sentence, imprisonment, and

Though not ordained, Delaune was closely involved with the prominent Particular Baptist ministers in London. In 1675, alongside of Hanserd Knollys, William Kiffen, Daniel Dyke, John Gosnold, and Henry Forty, he coauthored a short tract evaluating Henry Danvers' work.[67] In 1681, Delaune worked with Benjamin Keach to produce the massive and popular *Tropologia*, demonstrating an ample knowledge of biblical languages and patristic literature.[68] After the death of his father-in-law, Hutchinson, Delaune continued the cause of Baptist covenantal polemics, particularly against Joseph Whiston's reply to Hutchinson.[69]

Delaune defended the practice of credobaptism in standard fashion by rejecting the paedobaptist argument from consequences. As with the rest of the Particular Baptists, his rejection of consequences was connected specifically to the context of positive law.[70] Delaune said, "Baptism [is] a part of Gospel instituted Worship, and all the force and authority it hath upon the conscience in point of practice is to be derived from the plain and express Law and word of God, by which it is made an Ordinance."[71] He took special care to clarify that the Particular Baptists did not deny all consequences in theology, but rather they disallowed their use to establish a command based purely on positive institution. In a rare moment of concession, Whiston replied, "I suppose we are fully agreed about Consequences."[72]

Desiring to keep his treatise as short as possible, Delaune did not dive into great exegetical detail about the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 17, but rather referred the reader to Tombes, Blackwood, Patient, Lawrence, Hutchinson, Steed, and Cheare for a defense of the same.

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death, and commented, "'Tis pity after his Death he has no better a Hand to recommend him to the World; but since no Man will build a Monument upon his Grave, I thought it a Debt due to his ill-rewarded Merit, to write this as a Monument upon his Work, and I am sorry it is perform'd no better." Defoe was familiar with the Particular Baptists, and even mentioned James Jones' coffee house where some of the London elders met in the 1680s and 1690s. Cf. Arnold, *Benjamin Keach*, 25.

[67] Cf. Anon., *The Baptists Answer to Mr. Obed. Wills*.

[68] Benjamin Keach and Thomas Delaune, *Tropologia, or, A key to open Scripture metaphors the first book containing sacred philology, or the tropes in Scripture, reduc'd under their proper heads, with a brief explication of each* (London: John Richardson and John Darby, 1681).

[69] Whiston, *An Essay to Revive the Primitive Doctrine*, 244-254.

[70] De Laune, *Truth Defended*, 18. "We are generally charged to deny *all Consequences* from Scripture, which is false; for we grant that after the example of our Lord *Jesus* and his Apostle, *Mat*. 23. 31, 32 *Act*. 13. 33, 34. we may from *plain* and *lawfull* premises, infer their *necessary Conclusion*. The thing we deny is, that such *Sophistical, pretended Consequences*, (not at all countenanced in Scripture Text) as our adversaries use in the management of this Controversie of Infant Baptism against us, are of any validity or credit, and should not therefore be used."

[71] De Laune, *Truth Defended*, 10.

[72] Whiston, *Infant Baptism Plainly Proved* (London: Jonathan Robinson, 1678), 196.

Much of Delaune's treatise revolved around Whiston's specific attack on Hutchinson's book, which Whiston had called "utterly useless." One area where Whiston pinpointed confusion in Hutchinson's language was his use of the terminology of substance and administration. Whiston said,

> [Hutchinson] positively affirms, that the Covenant of Grace, and its Administration, are two distinct Covenants…and tells us…that the Covenant of Circumcision, which must necessarily intend that Covenant which before he affirmed to be the Administration of the Covenant of Grace, may be called a Covenant of Works, and then a Covenant of Works may be the Administration of the Covenant of Grace; which, whether rational or congruous, I shall leave all Men to judge.[73]

Whiston was right to identify confusion in these expressions. If the administration is the outward form of the covenant, then how can the covenant of circumcision be a separate covenant from the covenant of grace, yet be an administration (outward form of the covenant) of the covenant of grace?

Delaune stepped in at this point. But his method of refutation was unhelpful. Delaune simply reproduced a section from Cheare and Steed's work, distinguishing the covenant of grace into its substance and administration.[74] In its substance, the covenant of grace had always been the same. In its administration, it had passed under two phases, the old and new covenants. The old administration was a separate covenant of works for life in Canaan, begun with Abraham and developed through Moses. As with Hutchinson, so also with Delaune, without a grasp of their nuanced typology, this model did not make sense to the paedobaptists. In other words, quoting Cheare and Steed back at Whiston as a defense of Hutchinson was basically just quoting Hutchinson back at Whiston.

Later in his work, Delaune added a degree of clarity, putting his finger on the difficulty. He said,

> It is before demonstrated (I hope undenyably) that the Covenant of Grace is immutable and everlasting—That in respect of its various administrations under *Law* and *Gospel* it is called two Covenants, *New* and *Old*—That the Covenant of works so called, under the Law administred to the Covenant of Grace in Types and Figures, of which circumcision, being the head Ordinance, was *synechdocally* called the Covenant, *Gen*. 17.10. And that the covenant of Grace is now under the Evangelical Dispensation administred in that purity and spirituality Typed out by

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[73] Whiston, *An Essay to Revive the Primitive Doctrine*, 248.

[74] Delaune, *Truth Defended*, 7-9. Cf. Cheare and Steed, *A Plain Discovery*, 8-14.

> the Law. Therefore, what *incongruity* and *absurdity* is to be hereon chargeable is to me unknown.[75]

The incongruity Delaune could not see, apparently, was the problematic flexibility of the term "administration." This term was used to refer to the outward organization of a covenant, and to refer to the appropriation of salvific benefits.

For the Particular Baptists, the old covenant was a means through which the elect received the salvific benefits of the covenant of grace. Thus some called the old covenant an administration of the covenant of grace. But, what they meant by this was not simply that the old covenant was the first of two outward organizations of the one covenant of grace. They meant that although the old covenant was a separate covenant from the covenant of grace, it purposely administered, i.e., dispensed, the benefits of the covenant of grace through its typological subservience. Without such distinctions, calling the old covenant the old administration of the covenant of grace appeared to be calling the old covenant the same covenant as the covenant of grace.

Like Cheare, Steed, and Hutchinson, Delaune used this model to defend the notion that the covenant of grace belonged only to the elect, and always had. He claimed that this was the unavoidable conclusion of paedobaptist covenant theology itself.[76] Many paedobaptist theologians and the Westminster Assembly's catechism, he argued, taught this very thing. Question and Answer 31 of the Larger Catechism stated, "Q. 31 *With*

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[75] Delaune, *Truth Defended*, 19-20.

[76] Delaune, who knew Latin, appealed to the following passages from paedobaptists to support his argument that in Reformed theology the covenant of grace belonged to the elect alone and that its members could not fall away. The passages cited include arguments that the covenant of grace is a testamentary disposition based on God's initiation and maintenance, not a mutual contract, that because God guarantees the promises of the covenant of grace they cannot fail, that church covenants include more than the elect, but the covenant of grace includes the elect alone, and distinctions between legal promises made to the natural seed of Abraham and invincible evangelical promises made to Abraham's spiritual seed, identified as believers. Cf. Johannes Piscator, *Analysis Logica Omnium Epistolarum Pauli* (London: George Bishop, 1608), 107-108, 757-758; Johannes Heinrich Alsted, *Praecognitorum Theologicorum Libri Duo* (Frankfurt: Antonium Hummium, 1614), 627; William Ames, *Coronis ad Collationem Hagiensem* (Amsterdam: John Jansson, 1630, 3rd edition), 289, 305, 307, 309-312, 325; Johannes Wollebius, *Compendium Theologiae Christianae* (Amsterdam: Aegidium Janssonium, 1655, 9th edition), 119-120; William Twisse, *Vindiciae Gratiae, Potestatis Ac Providentiae Dei* (Amsterdam: John Jansson, 1648), 736; Abraham Scultetus, *Idea Concionum In Jesaiam Prophetam, ad populum Haidelbergensem habitarum* (Geneva: Petrus Aubertus, 1618), 56; Robert Bolton, *Instructions For A Right Comforting Afflicted Consciences* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1631), 372-373; John Norton, *Responsio Ad Totam Quaestionum Syllogen a clarisimo viro Domino Guilielmo Apollonio* (London: R.B., 1648), 30-31; John Diodati, *Pious Annotations Upon the Holy Bible* (London: Nicolas Fussell, 1643), 128.

whom was the Covenant of Grace made? A. The Covenant of Grace was made with Christ as the second *Adam*, and in him, with all the elect, as his seed."[77]

This, of course, raised the question of external or outward covenantal membership. Paedobaptists of the Reformed tradition would generally not claim that their children were elect, but that they had a right to the outward ordinances of the covenant. Delaune countered that if one considers the terms of the covenant, infants could not meet the requirements. He said, "The Conditional Covenant of Grace…I can find it to be no other then this—whosoever believeth shall be saved…The Covenant of Grace gives what it requires, and enables the Covenanters to perform the Conditions required by receiving the Graces therein promised."[78] Because these were the conditions of the covenant of grace, a truth confessed by the paedobaptists themselves,[79] the Baptists administered the covenant according to the terms. This refuted Whiston's claim that the Baptists baptized based on election. Delaune said, "We baptize none because they are elected, but because they profess Faith and Repentance."[80]

As he brought his remarks to a conclusion, Delaune also defended Hutchinson's use of Owen. After verifying that Hutchinson had accurately quoted Owen, Delaune stated,

> What the *Doctor* supposes to *Infants being in the Covenant, in his Judgement or practice* concerns not the matter in hand…And, I am as certain, that the *Doctors* discourse of the Covenant, wholly excludes them from any such title. And if Mr. *Whiston* can no better reconcile the *Doctors* words to his *Practice*, he had better have held his peace.[81]

Delaune was convinced that even if Owen held infants to be in the covenant visibly, his theology did not support such a conclusion. If Whiston was not going to resolve the tension, Delaune thought he should keep quiet about it.

Delaune's work contributed nothing new to the field of arguments. In fact, Delaune was primarily concerned with pitting authors against authors. Whether quoting other

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[77] This is similar to Blackwood's exchange with Blake, covered in chapter 2. Cf. "It cannot be denied, but there are many expressions ordinarily found in many Orthodox Writers, and like passages frequently heard in Sermons from godly Ministers, seemingly implying asserting it, and restraining the Covenant onely to the elect and regenerate…But when these men fully explain themselves, they yield up again to us…and ordinarily do distinguish of an outward and inward Covenant." Blake, *Vindicae Foederis*, 191.

[78] Delaune, *Truth Defended*, 18.

[79] Cf. WCF 7.3. The covenant of grace is the covenant "Wherein he freely offereth unto sinners, Life, and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, his holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to beleeve."

[80] Delaune, *Truth Defended*, 18.

[81] Delaune, *Truth Defended*, 20.

Particular Baptists, defending Hutchinson, or using paedobaptist writings to support his own principles, Delaune's polemic did not further the debate in any substantial way. But Delaune is a helpful illustration of the lack of clarity that the language of substance and administration carries when explaining the relationship between the old and new covenants and the covenant of grace.

When Whiston replied to Delaune, he affirmed that they were agreed that the covenant of grace is absolute to the elect, and to the elect alone. But he alleged that the covenant of grace, conditionally made, is no other than the Abrahamic covenant. In Whiston's view, this is where they parted ways. But Whiston claimed he wasn't sure if Delaune held that the Abrahamic covenant was "a covenant of works" or "a complicated covenant, both the Covenant of Grace, and also the Covenant of Works."[82] Whiston further critiqued the idea that the conditional covenant supplies its own requirements. If this were the case, it would not be the conditional covenant but the absolute covenant. Thus, the conditional covenant included children but did not necessarily provide the conditions required.[83]

This raises the question of consistency for Whiston as well. Previously, Whiston had rejected a great portion of Delaune's work based on the fact that Delaune appealed to the distinction between the substance and the administration of the covenant. For Delaune, the elect alone enjoyed the substance, salvation. Children had been included in the old covenant administration, which was a separate covenant, but not in the new covenant. In reply, Whiston had said that "when I affirm the Infant-Seed of *Abraham* and of all other *Believers* are taken with their Parents into the Covenant, I still mean the Covenant it self, and not its outward administration."[84] To claim that the children were of the substance of the covenant is perplexing in light of Whiston's claim that they are in the covenant outwardly in a conditional arrangement that did not guarantee their salvation.

In conclusion, the language of substance and administration created confusion on both sides. Delaune expressed Baptist conclusions in paedobaptist language which caused Whiston to see paedobaptist conclusions in the Baptists' language. As argued to this point, there was a core of agreement that all those who received salvation obtained it through the covenant of grace. The disagreement centered around the relationship of the old and new covenants and their connection to the covenants of works and grace. The language of substance and administration was a poor medium through which to communicate the debate.

The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1677)

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[82] Whiston, *Infant Baptism Plainly Proved*, 109-110.

[83] Whiston, *Infant Baptism Plainly Proved*, 112.

[84] Whiston, *Infant Baptism Plainly Proved*, 107-108.

During the reign of Charles II, the Particular Baptists were often fighting for their survival. Some, such as Delaune, died for their beliefs. In this time of persecution and dispersion there was a great need for unification and cooperation. In 1675, a circular letter signed by prominent Baptists such as William Kiffen, William Collins (c.1644-30 October, 1702), and Daniel Dyke (1614-1688)[85] called for Particular Baptists from around the country to meet in London the following spring. The intent of this meeting was "to form a plan for the providing an orderly standing ministry and study, and so become able ministers of the new testament."[86] There was a need and a desire for cooperative efforts to strengthen and grow their cause.

But the Particular Baptists could not grow properly while theological sickness corroded their infrastructure. Threats to the Particular Baptists' unity did not arise strictly from outside of their ranks. It was from the doctrinal deviations of one of their own ministers that a pressing need came for the public vindication and solidification of their theology.

Historical Context

From their earliest days, the Particular Baptists sought to plant new churches in London and the countryside. In the western part of England, the most active among them was Thomas Collier (d.1691) who had been sent out from William Kiffen's church in the 1640s and served as a chaplain, pastor, evangelist, church planter, and associational leader in the west.[87] Over the span of his long ministry, Collier covered considerable territory, geographically and theologically.

Throughout his life Collier swayed back and forth doctrinally, progressively distancing himself from Protestant orthodoxy. As early as 1648 Collier published heretical expressions regarding the trinity, denying the distinction of the persons.[88] He

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[85] Dyke replaced Thomas Patient as co-elder with Kiffen in 1668. Dyke graduated B.A. in 1633 and M.A. in 1636 from Cambridge. Venn and Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, II:79. See also, Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, 176. See A. C. Bickley, 'Dyke, Daniel (1614–1688)', rev. Beth Lynch, *ODNB*.

[86] Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, I:416. Given the number of university graduates among the first generation of Particular Baptist ministers, they saw the need to supply such an advantage to the next generation now that the universities were shut to nonconformists.

[87] On Collier see Stephen Wright, 'Collier, Thomas (*d.* 1691)', *ODNB*. See also Richard Dale Land, "Doctrinal Controversies of English Particular Baptists (1644-1691) As Illustrated by the Career and Writings of Thomas Collier," 2 vols. (D. Phil Dissertation, Oxford University, 1979); James M. Renihan, "Thomas Collier's Descent into Error: Collier, Calvinism, and the Second London Confession" in *Reformed Baptist Theological Review* I:1 (January 2004), 67-83.

[88] Thomas Collyer, *A General Epistle to the Universall Church of the First Born: Whose Names are written in Heaven* (London: Giles Calvert, 1648), 4. "He is not, first, as some imagine, *Three Persons, yet one God*, or three subsistings…Let any one judge if here be not three Gods, if three then not one."

also spoke loosely of the authority of the Scriptures, contending that the substance of the Bible was the word of God, but not perfectly so, due to the loss of the autographa.[89] Other doctrinal divergences could be noted, but by the early 1650s he signed his name prominently to the *Somerset Confession* which claimed full agreement with the doctrine of the London Particular Baptists.[90]

In 1674, Collier boldly placed himself outside the boundaries of Protestant orthodoxy in a book entitled *The Body of Divinity*.[91] Two years later he espoused heterodoxy even more explicitly in his *Additional Word to the Body of Divinity*.[92] Among other things, he taught that God exists in an "increated" heavens, that Christ died for the universe, that man is able to believe the gospel of his own power, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, that believers could lose their salvation, that salvation remained possible after death, and other heresies regarding the hypostatic union of the Mediator, Jesus Christ, asserting that God the Son was a creature.

A prolific author and active church-planter, Collier's open and published embrace of heresy could not go unanswered. In fact, regional pastors and some of the members of the church in Southwick where Collier was pastoring took notice and requested help from the London leaders in order to deal with his deviations. According to Collier's own narrative of the events, on 5 September, 1676,

> several Ministers of several Congregations assembled in one *James Elliot's* house in *Wormister,* where after consultation about the said Book, concluded to send a Letter to *London* about it…When the Letter came to *London*, they from thence send forth Letters to all the Churches in these parts, with several hands to it, proclaiming the said *T.C.* a Heretick.[93]

The London elders also "promised a book should be speedily sent forth to detect his Heresies."[94]

This letter split Collier's church because a portion of the membership supported his theology and were offended that no one had spoken to Collier personally about the

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[89] Collyer, *A General Epistle*, 31.

[90] Anon., *A Confession of the Faith of Several Churches of Christ in the County of Somerset, and of some Churches in the Counties neer adjacent* (London: Henry Hills, 1656).

[91] Thomas Collier, *The Body of Divinity, or, A Confession of Faith, Being the Substance of Christianity: Containing the Most Material things relating to matters both of Faith and Practise* (London: Nath. Crouch, 1674).

[92] Collier, *An Additional Word to the Body of Divinity, or Confession of Faith; Being the Substance of Christianity* (London: Printed for the Author, 1676).

[93] Collier, *A Brief and true NARRATIVE of the unrighteous dealings with Thomas Collier, a Member and Minister of the Church usually assembling at Southwick in the County of Wilts.* (n.p., 1677), 2.

[94] Ibid.

matter. A meeting between Collier's church, split two ways, and the London elders was called to deal with the issue. At the meeting, which took place around 26 October, 1676,[95] William Kiffen claimed that his church had authority over Collier because Collier had been a member of Kiffen's church prior to being sent into the countryside as a church planter. Collier denied any pastoral prerogative on Kiffen's part because the church Kiffen was now pastor of was a different church than the one from which he was sent out, which had split into two some years earlier.

According to Collier, the majority of the meeting was taken up by Nehemiah Coxe (1650-1689), "which they brought with them from *London*, whom probably they thought more accomplished for their design than themselves."[96] Coxe confronted Collier's heresies, much to Collier's dislike.[97] The meeting concluded "with high threatening of the Book before promised to be sent forth, and the designed end of the Meeting wholly frustrated."[98]

After the London elders returned to England, they summoned Collier there in a letter, but he refused to come.[99] Subsequently, they published the book dealing with Collier's errors—*Vindiciae Veritatis, Or a Confutation of the Heresies and Gross Errours Asserted by Thomas Collier in his Additional Word to his Body of Divinity*.[100] As he had been their champion in the personal confrontation with Collier, so also Nehemiah Coxe was the chosen penman for the published confutation of Collier's heterodoxy.

Coxe was relatively new to the scene of London Baptist life, having become pastor with William Collins of the Petty France church in 1675, and quite young (around 27 years old at this time).[101] But the senior elders of London saw this as no hindrance. William

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[95] Underhill, Edward Bean, ed. *The Records of a Church of Christ, Meeting in Broadmead, Bristol. 1640–1687* (London: The Hanserd Knollys Society, 1847), 358-360. The church in Bristol met on this date and asked the London elders to assist in ordaining Thomas Hardcastle (c. 1637–Sept 29, 1678). The London elders declined because they were urgently attending to the Collier issue and could not spare the time of travel, the distance between the Bristol church and Collier's church being about fifteen miles. The Bristol records name the London elders as [William] Kiffen, [Richard?] Deane, [James] Fitten, [Nehemiah] Cox, and [Joseph?] Moreton. Cf. Anon., "Story of the Jacob-Jessey Church, 1616-1678," *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* 1.4 (January 1910): 248.

[96] Collier, *A Brief and true NARRATIVE*, 5. For more on Nehemiah Coxe, see chapter six.

[97] Collier said that Coxe "spent the whole time in that rudeness of Debate, as the said *T.C.* had rarely met with from any sort of People, to the grief of the sober and unprejudiced Persons present," Collier, *A Brief and true NARRATIVE*, 5.

[98] Collier, *A Brief and true NARRATIVE*, 6.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Nehemiah Coxe, *Vindiciae Veritatis, Or a Confutation of the Heresies and Gross Errours Asserted by Thomas Collier in his Additional Word to his Body of Divinity* (London: Nath. Ponder, 1677).

[101] Collier said of Coxe's age, "So young, that his head might scarce be warm at that time." Collier, *A Sober and Moderate Answer to Nehemiah Coxe's Invective (pretended) Refutation as he saith of the gross Errors and*

Kiffen, Daniel Dyke, Joseph Maisters, James Fitton, Henry Forty, and William Collins wrote a preface to the work, stating that Coxe's "inferiority in years" was no obstacle to the work at hand. In fact, Coxe "was not so much prompted to it by his natural inclination, as by the joint and earnest perswasion of several of the Elders, and that of elder years."[102]

Coxe's fitness for the task was justified on two grounds. First, "we did judge him meet and of ability for the work." Second, "at that time of his entring upon it, a more than ordinary Providence of God, gave him leisure for it more then others, by suspending him from other more weighty employment."[103] One wonders what this "more than ordinary Providence" was. It would seem to be some kind of financial wellbeing that gave Coxe a measure of free time.

Meanwhile, Collier's church remained split, and they held another conference, this time with other Baptist leaders[104] who again asserted that Kiffen's church held authority over Collier who was still a member there, in their opinion. The meeting produced no effects because a majority of Collier's church voted to support him, and nothing else could be done in the matter.[105] When the London elders went home, they held their own conference and decided in favor of Collier's opposition.

Not long after Coxe wrote against Collier, Collier replied with a critique of Coxe's attack.[106] The reply was tedious, and it was clear that Collier had no intention of changing his mind or putting down his pen on the matter. The members of Collier's church who opposed his aberrations remained distraught and wrote for help to the Bristol church which then contacted the London churches.

On 2 August, 1677, the London and Bristol elders held a meeting in which "Mr. *Cox* was chief."[107] They produced a letter formally charging Collier with heresy and sent it to Collier's church, advising the church to reject Collier, and advising those who disagreed with his theology not to remain with those that defended it.[108]

The letter from the London and Bristol elders defined a heretic as one "that chooseth an Opinion by which some fundamental Article of the Christian Religion is subverted."[109] Where did the Particular Baptists draw the lines of orthodoxy, and the fundamental

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Heresies asserted by Thomas Collier in his Additional Word: Wherein his Refutation is examined, and found too light (London: Francis Smith, 1677), ii of an unpaginated preface.

[102] Coxe, *Vindiciae Veritatis*, ii of an unpaginated preface.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Richard Gay and Walter Penn.

[105] Collier, *A Brief and true NARRATIVE*, 7-12. Kerry J. Birch, "Richard Gay of Haycombe: An Exploration of a story and its influence on local Baptist family and community history" *Baptist Quarterly* 37 (1997), 378.

[106] Collier, *A Sober and Moderate Answer to Nehemiah Coxe's Invective*.

[107] Collier, *A Brief and true NARRATIVE*, 16.

[108] The entire letter is transcribed in Collier, *A Brief and true NARRATIVE*, 12-15.

[109] Collier, *A Brief and true NARRATIVE*, 13.

articles of Christian religion? That very month, they published *A Confession of Faith put forth by the Elders and Brethren of many congregations of Christians (Baptized upon profession of their faith) in London and the country*.

This confession followed, word for word in most chapters, the Westminster Confession and the Savoy Declaration.[110] The Particular Baptists did this "the more abundantly, to manifest our consent with both, in all the fundamental articles of the Christian Religion."[111] Similar to the Epistle prefacing the Confession, the Particular Baptists stated in an appendix, "We have…endeavoured to manifest, That in the fundamental Articles of Christianity we mind the same things, and have therefore expressed our belief in the same words, that have on the like occasion been spoken by other societies of Christians before us."[112]

This was important because of Collier's errors. The Confession was published so that anyone who wanted to know what they believed could learn of it "from our selves (who jointly concur in this work) and may not be misguided, either by undue reports; or by the ignorance or errors of particular persons, who going under the same name with our selves, may give an occasion of scandalizing the truth we profess."[113]

The problem, as they state it, was that many were attributing Collier's views to the Particular Baptists who went "under the same name." When Collier published *The Body of Divinity* in 1674, its alternate title was *or, A Confession of Faith*. Contributing to this was the fact that copies of the First London Confession of Faith were "not commonly to be had,"[114] meaning that in the mid 1670s if one wanted to know what the Particular Baptists believed, Thomas Collier's "Confession of Faith" was the most prominent public identifier of their theology. The Particular Baptists desperately needed a public defense and declaration of their orthodoxy. In their collective Confession, the Particular Baptists were saying that Collier's Confession of Faith was not their own.

On 26 August, 1677 the record book of the Petty France church, of which Nehemiah Coxe was a pastor, records "It was agreed that a Confession of Faith wth the appendix thereto having been read & considered by the Brē: should be published."[115] It is highly likely that Nehemiah Coxe and William Collins were the chief editors of this confession. Coxe himself had said in his reply to Collier, "There can be no Gospel Peace without

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[110] Supplements were added from the First London Baptist Confession.

[111] Anon., *A Confession of Faith*, iv of an unpaginated preface.

[112] Anon., *A Confession of Faith*, 109.

[113] Anon., *A Confession of Faith*, 109-110.

[114] Anon., *A Confession of Faith*, ii of an unpaginated preface.

[115] LMA CLC/179/MS20228/001B "Memoranda and Minutes of Church Meetings and Membership Lists of the Congregations Successively at Petty France, Westminster; Artillery Lane, Spitalfields; Walbrook; and Turners' Hall, Philpot Lane." The book is incorrectly titled by the archive. Petty France was not in Westminster; it was on the west side of St. Botolph-without-Bishopsgate.

truth, nor Communion of Saints, without an agreement in fundamental principles of the Christian Religion."[116] And in one particular point, Coxe had claimed that he could defend Reformed doctrine "any time, if called to it…from the confessions of Faith of all the reformed Churches, and from the Writings of all the worthy reformers"[117]

If Coxe was the point-man of the Particular Baptists during the Collier controversy, in private conferences and in print, if Coxe had providential free time to work on such projects, if the united eldership of London and Bristol promoted him in all of these capacities, if the timing of the Confession's publication coincided with these events, and if it was from Coxe's church that the publication of the Confession seems to have sprung, then it is highly likely, circumstantially, that Coxe had a significant hand in its preparation and publication.[118]

Ivimey claimed that "In the year 1677, there was an assembly of the pastors and elders of the Baptist churches both in London and the country." At this meeting, he stated, "they agreed to set forth *a Confession of Faith* said to be done *by the Elders and Brethren of many congregations of Christians (Baptized upon profession of their faith) in London and the country*."[119] Without documentation, this claim is impossible to verify. Perhaps the 2 August meeting of the Bristol and London elders was the conference in question, the meeting in which "Mr. *Cox* was chief." Perhaps at the very meeting where Baptists negatively defined a heretic as one that departs from "some fundamental Article of the Christian Religion" they also positively decided to confess their faith "in all the fundamental articles of the Christian Religion."

This historical context is important for appreciating the Baptists' choices in the covenant theology of their second Confession of Faith. It was not a polemical document seeking to distance the Baptists from Presbyterians and Independents, but a declaration of agreement in the fundamental articles of the Christian religion. The covenant theology of 2LCF, much like 1LCF, revolved primarily around the core doctrines of Protestant covenant theology and avoided, for the most part, the distinctive opinions of the Particular Baptists.

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[116] Coxe, *Vindiciae Veritatis*, vi of an unpaginated preface.

[117] Coxe, *Vindiciae Veritatis*, 108. Such knowledge would facilitate editing a new confession based on older ones.

[118] In the literature of the Particular Baptists, the confession is never treated as one man's theology, nor do they mention any particular person or persons connected to its editing. And when other authors replied to it, they simply addressed "the authors of the Confession." Cf. "To the Godly and Learned among the Antipaedo-baptists, especially the Authors of the late Confession of their Faith." Whiston, *Infant-Baptism Plainly Proved*, 91. Collier replied to the confession without mentioning a particular author in Collier, *A Confession of Faith, Published on Special Occasion* (London: Francis Smith, 1678), 42-64.

[119] Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, I:420-421.

The Covenant of Works

A careful search for the covenant of works in the Particular Baptists' writings yields plentiful but scattered fruit.[120] This is primarily due to the polemical nature of their writings. The covenant of works was not an area of contention between the Particular Baptists and the paedobaptists. When the covenant of works does arise, it is treated as a given, as for Blackwood and Hutchinson. In some writings, the term itself is not used but Adam is called a "publick person," and understood to stand in a role of federal headship over mankind. The human race received Adam's guilt and his fallen nature. In the immediate historical and theological context of the confession, Nehemiah Coxe's collectively-approved rebuttal of Collier mentioned a covenant made with Adam at creation.[121] This was only a few months before the publication of the Confession itself.

An examination of the Confession of Faith is quite similar to the corpus of Baptist writings. The covenant of works does not jump off the page to the reader, but it is there. In fact, in some places the editors of the confession removed the phrase "covenant of works" as it had been present in the Westminster Confession and Savoy Declaration. Consequently, some have concluded that the doctrine is not present in the Confession.[122] This is untrue. The covenant of works, in substance and in name, is taught clearly in the Confession.

In 2LCF, the covenant of works first appears in chapter 6, "Of the fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment thereof." Comparison with the source documents of the Confession brings to the surface not a shying away from the covenant of works, but a clearer confession of it.

WCF	Savoy Declaration[123]	2LCF[124]
6.1. Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit.	**6.1.** ***God having made a covenant of works and life, thereupon, with*** our first parents ***and all their posterity in them, they*** being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan did willfully transgress the law of	6.1. **Although God created Man upright, and perfect, and gave him a righteous law, which had been unto life had he kept it, and threatened death upon the breach thereof; yet he did not long abide in this honor; Satan**

[120] See the final Conclusion for the results of such a search.

[121] Cf. Coxe, *Vindiciae Veritatis*, 64, 73, 79. Coxe was refuting Collier who denied that Adam's sin condemned man to "the second death." For more on the covenant of works in Coxe's thought, see chapter six.

[122] Greg Nichols stated that in 2LCF the Particular Baptists "decline to confess the covenant of works." See Nichols, *Covenant Theology*, 326-327.

[123] Text found in SD, but not WCF, is in bold italics.

[124] Text found in 2LCF, but not in SD or WCF, is in bold.

	their creation, ***and break the covenant*** in eating the forbidden fruit.	**using** the subtlety **of the serpent to seduce Eve, then by her seducing Adam, who without any compulsion,** did willfully transgress the Law of their Creation, **and the command given unto them**, in eating the forbidden fruit.[125]

Using this comparison, the Savoy divines went beyond the Westminster divines by saying that God made a covenant of works with Adam, but they did not elaborate in detail on what that meant. They simply used the term, saving the details for chapter 7. The Particular Baptists did not use the term "covenant of works" in this chapter, but they spelled out all of its key features. Adam received a law (mentioned in 4.3 also) that "had been unto life had he kept it." This promise was accompanied by a threat of death for disobedience. Paragraph three states that Adam was a federal head, and that this was "by God's appointment." In other words, the arrangement through which Adam, based on obedience or disobedience to a law, was destined to impute righteousness or unrighteousness to his descendants was not a natural condition derived from Adam's created state; it was appointed by God.

In chapters four and six, the Particular Baptists had already laid out the covenant of works in everything but its name. It would have been redundant for them to copy WCF/SD 7.2. Comparison of the source documents of chapter 7 is likewise important.

WCF	Savoy Declaration	2LCF
7.1. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.	7.1. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have ***attained the*** reward ***of life***, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.	7.1. The distance between God and the Creature is so great, that although reasonable Creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of Life, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express, by way of Covenant.
7.2. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to	7.2. The first covenant made with man, was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to	

[125] The tabular comparisons used in this chapter, with slight modifications, come from Renihan, *True Confessions*.

Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.	Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.	

The first paragraph of chapter 7 is definitive proof of the Particular Baptists' confession of the covenant of works. In standard Reformed fashion, they acknowledged that as Creator of all things God possesses absolute dominion over his creation.[126] God owes nothing to man; man owes everything to God. Because of this natural relationship between Creator and creature, man cannot perform an action that would obligate God to reward him in any way. If man obeys commands given to him, he simply receives the approbation of justice which declares that he performed his duty. He adds nothing to God, and thus God owes no reward to man.

If a reward of life were made available to Adam for his obedience to a law, then this would have been possible only through God voluntarily condescending to make Adam's obedience meritorious for that reward.[127] This, they confessed, God did "by way of covenant." Having confessed in chapter 6 that Adam's obedience to the law would have been "unto life," in chapter 7 the Particular Baptists confessed that this work-reward relationship was possible only through a covenant.

Later in the Confession, in 19.1 (Of God's Law), this is repeated. The Particular Baptists confessed that "God gave to Adam a law of universal obedience and a particular precept…by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience; promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it."

Whether it is Adam's federal headship, the laws of the covenant (positive and moral), the promise of life, or the threat of death, all of these elements are taught in the Confession. Furthermore, the Confession stated in 6.3 that Adam's role as a federal head was "by God's appointment" and that the reward of life was only attainable "by way of

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[126] Cf. Flavel, *Planelogia*, 281. "God might have dealt with us in a supream way of mere Sovereignty and Dominion, commanding what Duties he pleased, and establishing his Commands by what Penalties he had pleased, and never have brought himself under the tye and obligation of a Covenant to his own Creatures: but he chuses to deal familiarly with his People, the way of Covenanting being a familiar way." Thomas Manton, *A Practical Commentary, or an Exposition with Notes on the Epistle of James* (London: J. Macock, 1651), 129. "Some Divines say, That in innocency we could not merit; when the Covenant did seem to hang upon Works, we could, in their sence, *impetrare*, but not *mereri*; obtain by vertue of doing, but not deserve: Merit and desert are improper notions to express the relation between the work of a creature, and the reward of a Creator." Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 221-222. Cf. also Hugh Binning, *The Common Principles of Christian Religion* (London: R.S., 1666), 238; Gillespie, *The Ark of the Testament Opened*, 301.

[127] Cf. Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants That God made with Men before the Law* (London: J[ohn] D[arby], 1681), 28. "It is certainly concluded from that Promise of Reward…that was given to Adam, which he could never have obtained, but by God's condescending to deal with him upon Terms of a Covenant."

Covenant." The name itself was used as well in 20.1 where they confessed that "The covenant of works being broken by sin" made it "unprofitable unto life." Likewise, twice in 19.6 the Particular Baptists confessed that believers are not under the law "as a covenant of works." The Particular Baptists confessed the Reformed doctrine of the covenant of works. Other than some curious choices of editing, there is no evidence that they rejected or distanced themselves from the common confessional doctrine of the covenant of works.[128]

The Covenant of Grace

There was no doctrinal difference between the Particular Baptists and the Westminster and Savoy divines regarding the covenant of works. Likewise, from a dogmatic standpoint, there was no disagreement between them regarding the covenant of works' counterpart, the covenant of grace. For both sides, the covenant of grace is the covenant through which the elect obtain salvation. Apart from any worthiness in them, they are given faith in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. A comparison of the confessions shows their unity.

WCF	Savoy Declaration	2LCF
7.3. Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life his Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.	7.3. Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the Covenant of Grace; wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.	7.2. **Moreover Man having brought himself under the curse of the Law** by his fall**, it** pleased the Lord to make a Covenant of Grace wherein he freely offereth unto Sinners, Life and Salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them Faith in him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal Life, his holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.

The Particular Baptists often used this underlying dogmatic unity to argue against any model of the covenant of grace that included the non-elect or permitted its members to fall away from the covenant. By confessing the exact same doctrine of the covenant of

[128] In 1694, William Collins was appointed by the London Baptists' General Assembly to draft a catechism for the use of their churches and families. In this catechism, the Baptists asserted a covenant made with Adam, calling it a "covenant of life." Cf. Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, I:533; Anon., *A Brief Instruction in the Principles of Christian Religion* (London: 1695, 5th edition), 5-6. See questions 15 and 19.

grace, dogmatically, the Particular Baptists intentionally placed themselves within Reformed covenantalism.

But their paths parted when speaking historically of the covenant of grace. This was true even among paedobaptist covenant theology. All three Confessions proved to be unique in this regard.

WCF	Savoy Declaration	2LCF
7.4. This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in Scripture by the name of a testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ the Testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed. 7.5. This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law, it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foresignifying Christ to come; which were, for that time, sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah, by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the Old Testament. 7.6. Under the gospel, when Christ, the substance, was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper: which, though fewer in number, and	7.4. This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in **the** Scripture by the name of a Testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ the testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed. 7.5. ***Although this covenant hath been*** differently ***and variously*** administered ***in respect of ordinances and institutions in the time of the law, and since the coming of Christ in the flesh; yet for the substance and efficacy of it, to all its spiritual and saving ends, it is one and the same; upon the account of which various dispensations, it is called the Old and New Testament.***	7.3. **This Covenant is revealed in the Gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of Salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament; and it is founded in that Eternal Covenant transaction, that was between the Father and the Son, about the Redemption of the Elect; and it is alone by the Grace of this Covenant, that all of the posterity of fallen Adam, that ever were saved, did obtain life and a blessed immortality; Man being now utterly incapable of acceptance with God upon those terms, on which Adam stood in his state of innocency.**

administered with more simplicity, and less outward glory, yet, in them, it is held forth in more fullness, evidence and spiritual efficacy, to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles; and is called the New Testament. There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations.		

The key difference between these confessions is the Particular Baptists' complete avoidance of distinguishing the covenant of grace into two historical administrations. In their "quill-skirmishes," the Particular Baptists had repeatedly rejected the idea that the old covenant was the covenant of grace in a different form. Their typology distinguished the covenant of grace from the earthly national covenants made with Abraham and Moses. The hermeneutics they employed were not those of the continental Anabaptists, but of the Reformed tradition as exemplified by theologians from Ursinus to Cameron. The old covenant was distinct from the covenant of grace, but subservient to the covenant of grace.

In their Confession, the Particular Baptists directly tied the covenant of grace to the gospel. Where the gospel is found, there is the covenant of grace. As the gospel was progressively made known throughout history, the covenant of grace was progressively made known throughout history. The covenant of grace should not be flattened into two administrations, oversimplifying its progressive revelation and complex relationship to the old covenant. Rather, the covenant of grace should be seen through "farther steps." Through the gospel, it permeated the entire Old Testament, from the promise of the seed of the woman to "the full discovery thereof" in the New Testament. And all the elect were saved by this covenant.

The language is carefully broad and specific at the same time. Any of the Particular Baptists' opponents could have subscribed to these statements. Many paedobaptist treatises dedicated great detail to the progressive historical development of the covenant of grace, often subdividing the two administrations of the covenant of grace into narrower periods. The difference between the confessions, then, has less to do with what the Particular Baptists said, and more to do with what they did not say.[129] The model they

[129] This is exemplified again in WCF 27.5 (Savoy Declaration 28.5), which was deleted from the Baptists' confession. When speaking of the sacraments in the Old Testament, the Westminster and Savoy divines stated, "The Sacraments of the Old Testament, in regard of the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited, were for substance the same with those of the New." The Particular Baptists' could say the same

confessed was not so exclusively or distinctively Baptist that others would disagree with it. But they clearly refused to commit themselves to the more common, and at times unclear, vernacular of substance and administration.

Cheare, Steed, Hutchinson, and Delaune had used language almost identical to the Westminster Confession, and confusion abounded as a result. The Particular Baptists agreed that the substance of the covenant of grace was appropriated by the elect through the Old Testament and its ordinances. Thus, they could use the language of the Westminster Confession. But their typology distinguished the old covenant from the new in a way that the Westminster Confession did not intend, hence the confusion. In the Confession, by expressing the doctrine of the covenant of grace with direct reference to the gospel, a dogmatic move, and by expressing the continuity of salvation by this covenant in history, a historical move, the Particular Baptists avoided the standard paedobaptist model of covenant theology, but expressed the same core beliefs.[130]

While the Particular Baptists' choice of words clearly reflects their model of the covenant of grace, it is possible that this chapter of the Confession was written broadly, not just to avoid unnecessarily distancing themselves from Presbyterian and

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things, but their typology meant something different by it. Another example where the Particular Baptists avoided the common paedobaptist model, but did not replace it with their own is in 19.2. The Westminster Confession stated that after the fall the law continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness, and "as such" was delivered to the Israelites through Moses. The Westminster divines were specifically avoiding the idea that the law was a covenant of works to Israel. The Savoy divines and the Baptists agreed that the law continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness, but they deleted the phrase "as such" relative to Israel's reception of the law. They opened the door to paradigms that considered the old covenant to be a covenant of works.

[130] While avoiding polemics in the Confession, the Particular Baptists did include a short argument against infant baptism in an appendix on baptism at the end of the Confession. They directed their arguments first at the church of England, addressed to those who agreed that "Repentance from dead works, and faith towards God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, is required in persons to be Baptised." The Anglicans used sponsors to resolve the issue of infants' incapability to profess. The Particular Baptists' reply was that although this practice was very ancient in church history, it was nevertheless unscriptural and wrong. The remaining arguments were directed at those who "ground their arguments for Infants baptism, upon a presumed fœderal holiness." In this section, no peculiar covenantal model was proposed. Rather, the Particular Baptists argued the case mainly from positive law, asserting that if the premise were granted that the children of believers belonged to the covenant, there was still no command for infant baptism. Abraham administered circumcision only to males, and only on the eighth day, not to all members of the covenant. Concerning I Corinthians 7:14 they argued that the holiness that passes from parent to child must come from both parents, not one. If one of the parents is unholy, so are the children. If the holiness that passes from believing to unbelieving spouse does not entitle the unbelieving spouse to baptism, then the resulting holiness of the children, from both parents, could not do so either. The effect could not be different than the cause, nor the root different from the tree. They concluded that although children can be saved, and parents have a duty to raise them in the fear and admonition of the Lord, they are not entitled to baptism unless they profess faith. Anon., *A Confession of Faith*, 109-142.

Congregational allies, but also to fit varying thought on this subject within the Baptists themselves. This is something they were willing to do. For example, they "purposely omitted the mention of things" relating to open and closed membership.[131]

The historical context of the confession lies in the London Baptists' cooperation with the Broadmead Bristol Baptist church, an open-membership church. One of the pastors of the Bristol church, Thomas Hardcastle,[132] whom Kiffen and Coxe had been asked to ordain but could not due to their dealing with Collier, taught a model that differed from most of the Particular Baptists. He contended that the old covenant was the covenant of grace.[133] Even Cheare, Steed, Hutchinson, and Delaune, despite their confusing language, rejected this idea. The language of 2LCF 7.3 is broad enough that while it confesses a covenantal model that intentionally departs from standard paedobaptist federalism, it seems to do so in a way that allows for some diversity of thought and expression.[134]

Later mentions of the covenant of grace in the confession are concerned with the benefits of salvation which believers derive from the covenant. In 14.2 the confession states that saving faith is directed primarily at Christ, receiving salvation "by virtue of the Covenant of grace." Likewise, in 15.2 the confession states that God, "in the Covenant of Grace, mercifully provided that Believers so sinning, and falling, be renewed through Repentance unto Salvation." This is expanded in 15.5, "Such is the provision which God hath made through Christ in the Covenant of Grace, for the preservation of Believers unto Salvation." Believers derive not only faith and repentance from the covenant, but also

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[131] Anon., *A Confession of Faith*, 137-138.

[132] Hardcastle (c.1637-Sept 29, 1678) graduated B.A. from St. Johns, Cambridge, in 1655-6. Ordained in the Church of England, and later ejected, Hardcastle suffered many imprisonments for his nonconformity. See Roger Hayden, 'Hardcastle, Thomas (bap. 1637, d. 1678)', *ODNB*; Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, 247.

[133] In a manuscript exposition of the Westminster Shorter Catechism he said, "There is a Covenant of grace, & there is a twofold Administration of this Covenant of grace. There's the old administration which is called the old testament. The new administration which is called the new testament; both one the covenant, though called old & new, though called two commonly but one covenant." For Hardcastle, the old covenant was the covenant of grace. He said, "Adam was under a Covenant of works, Do this and live, the Jews were under a covenant of grace, which was obscured [i.e., revealed darkly] by types, sacrifices, and figures which did signifie and prefigure Christ." He continued, "Although the old administration was such, as made it to be looked upon (the outside of it) as a Covenant of works, if you look to Mount Sinai, there you find nothing but working: if you look to the sacrifices there you have a glimpse of some relief by a Saviour." Thomas Hardcastle, *Expositions of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism* (Bristol, UK: Bristol Baptist College, 1671-1672), 52, 109-110. Given that this was written in 1671, it is possible that Hardcastle was of another opinion by 1677. There is no such evidence, however. One of the previous pastors of the Broadmead Bristol church, Robert Purnell (d.1666), also taught that the Jews were under a covenant of grace. Cf. Robert Purnell, *A Little Cabinet Richly Stored with all sorts of Heavenly Varieties, and Soul-reviving Influences* (London: R.W., 1657), 19-57. On Purnell, see Underhill, *The Records of a Church of Christ in Bristol*, 19-27.

[134] Perhaps views like those of John Spilsbury were still active among the Particular Baptists. Spilsbury had taught, somewhat obscurely, that the old and new covenants were two testamentary forms of the same covenant.

their perseverance depends on "the nature of the Covenant of Grace from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof" (2LCF 17.2). Lastly, the confession states in 21.1 (WCF 20.1) that the blessings of liberty of conscience "were common also to Believers under the Law for the substance of them." These expressions, all of which are taken directly from either the Westminster or Savoy documents, are consistent with the continuity of salvation through the covenant of grace in history.

One of the ways in which the Particular Baptists' confession stepped ahead of its parent documents was an explicit appeal to the covenant of redemption. In 7.3, the Baptists confessed that the covenant of grace "is founded in that Eternal Covenant transaction, that was between the Father and the Son, about the Redemption of the Elect." Following Savoy, in 8.1 they stated, "It pleased God in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus his only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man." Their first confession, though somewhat edited in the later editions, had also spoken of a covenant between the Father and the Son. Here again they confessed this doctrine.

The advantage of appealing to the covenant of redemption was that it closely connected the historical application of salvation, the covenant of grace, to the decree of salvation, the covenant of redemption. These truths were already confessed by all three confessions in 3.5-6, but the relationship of the covenant of redemption to the covenant of grace tightened the connections. In particular, it focused the covenants into union with Christ. As Christ was appointed Mediator of salvation to the elect in the covenant of redemption, so Christ is Mediator of salvation to the elect in the covenant of grace. Apart from union with Christ by faith, confessed in 7.2 as being a gift of the Holy Spirit, no claim could be made to the covenant of grace.

The Particular Baptists' doctrines of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace in the Confession are representative of their writings and of Reformed covenant theology. That which united Reformed theology was the dogmatic distinction between the law and the gospel, the covenants of works and grace. That which diversified Reformed covenant theology was the historical relationship of the covenants of works and grace to the old and new covenants. The Particular Baptists' Confession of Faith aligned itself specifically with the former and distinguished itself broadly among varying models of the latter.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the 1660s and 1670s were a period of persecution and oppression, confusion and confession. Political and religious pressures came from the restored clergy and kingship. The Particular Baptists' churches suffered, and the debate of baptism and covenant theology was relatively silent for a period of almost fifteen years. When resumed by Edward Hutchinson, he picked up where Abraham Cheare and Robert Steed had left off. Thomas Delaune, his son-in-law, followed in the footsteps of them all.

Their covenant theology perpetuated the common arguments seen thus far. The old covenant included both the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants which were covenants of works for blessed life in Canaan while the natural offspring of Abraham awaited the birth of Christ. All along, these covenants subserved or "administered" to the covenant of grace, making the gospel known and "dispensing" its salvific benefits. In these arguments, Hutchinson and Delaune appealed to typology similar to that of previous Particular Baptists and John Cameron. The shadow was not the substance.

Despite the minute details of the disagreements, Hutchinson and Delaune reflect the Particular Baptist pattern of viewing their covenant theology as a consistent model of Reformed theology itself. Their appeal to the Reformed tradition was both advantageous and disadvantageous. Hutchinson and Delaune cited John Owen's comments on the twofold seed of Abraham to substantiate their interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant and its effect on the church. Delaune added citations from nine additional paedobaptist authors to support his arguments. In so doing, they pointed to tensions within Reformed paedobaptist covenant theology. But they hurt their own cause by appropriating the language of substance and administration. Joseph Whiston, their opponent, pointed to the confusion this caused and pushed back. Hutchinson and Delaune saw no contradiction.

Around the time of these debates, Thomas Collier's heresies demanded a reply. The elders of the London churches, putting Nehemiah Coxe forward as their spokesman, confronted Collier. It was a time requiring unification, restoration, and public vindication. This they accomplished in their Confession of Faith in which they expressed agreement with Reformed orthodoxy regarding the covenants of works and grace. They avoided the language of substance and administration but offered a broad covenantal model in its place. The confusion of recent writers and the broadness of the confession left a need for a careful expression of Particular Baptist covenant theology, one that would clear the confusion and take the Particular Baptists into the next generation. Nehemiah Coxe supplied that need. To understand Nehemiah Coxe's covenant theology, however, it is necessary to understand the developments of covenant theology in his day. In particular, it is necessary to examine the foundation upon which he built, John Owen's covenant theology.

Chapter Five: John Owen and the Development of Diversity in the Reformed Covenantal Tradition

Introduction

John Owen's life (1616-1683) is the example *par excellence* of dissenters' experience in the seventeenth century.[1] Trained in Oxford and ordained in the Church of England, Owen's theological career saw the prospects of Puritanism and Presbyterianism rise and fall, he witnessed the Independents conquer and crumble with Cromwell, he felt the wrath of the royal restoration, and he died in a time of fear and suspicion about popish plots. Having departed from the Church of England, having abandoned Presbyterianism, and having fallen from the government with the rest of the Independents, Owen was a figure of the fringes. Yet he commanded widespread respect and attention for his academic rigor and authorial output. He may have been slandered by opponents and suspected of political machinations, but whatever the quantity of mud flung at him, his works were appreciated and admired in his own time as well as in the years and centuries that followed.

His life also serves as a parallel illustration of the Particular Baptists' development and identity. Several of the first-generation Particular Baptists were trained in England's universities and ordained in England's churches. They came from Separatist Puritanism. They were congregational in their ecclesiology, and a comparison of the Savoy Declaration to the Second London Baptist Confession demonstrates a nearly identical set of beliefs. In the family tree of English Puritanism, John Owen's experience and doctrine made him their closest relation. The same is true in the area of covenant theology. Owen argued that the old covenant was not the new covenant; the two covenants differed in substance. The old covenant was a covenant of works for life in the land of Canaan, reviving the original covenant of works and directing sinners to the covenant of grace.

By the time Owen expressed these views in his third commentary on Hebrews, such assertions were not new to the Reformed world or to Owen. This stream of thought flowing through Olevianus, Cameron, and many others had been well-established in Reformed literature. In 1674 Owen recommended Samuel Petto's (1624-1711) work *The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant Stated and Explained* which offered similar assertions. Petto stated clearly, "*That New or better Covenant is distinct from that at Mount*

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[1] On Owen, see Gribben, *John Owen and English Puritanism*; Carl Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Peter Toon, Ed., *The Correspondence of John Owen (1616-1683)* (UK: James Clarke, 1970); Kapic and Jones, *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology*. A helpful presentation of Owen's covenant theology as a deviation from the "majority view" is found in chapter 18 of Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 293-303.

Sinai: it is usually said, that they are *two administrations or dispensations of the same Covenant*: I think, they are not meerly one and the *same Covenant* diversely administred, but they are *two Covenants*."[2]

Owen commended Petto's labors, stating that his conclusions made sense of a difficult issue, namely that

> Under the Old Testament…there was such a mixt dispensation, revealing for certain ends, the Notion, Sense and Power of the first Covenant and preparative for the introduction of the full revelation and declaration of the latter by Jesus Christ…as that it is not easie to discern and distinguish what belongs unto the one in them and what to the other, or from whether of them they are to be denominated.[3]

Owen saw merit in breaking out of the standard covenant of works and grace binary that was applied to the Mosaic covenant. He wrote in his recommendation that "Besides [the covenant of works and the covenant of grace]…there is mention in the Scripture of sundry particular intervening Covenants that God made with his Church, or single persons, at several seasons."[4] These other covenants, however, were "emanations from and particular expressions or limitations of one or other of the two solemn Covenants."[5] Many years before his comments on Hebrews 8, then, Owen was advocating that the old covenant was distinct from both the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, and yet related to them.[6]

It was not just Owen's covenantal conclusions, though, that caused the Particular Baptists to rejoice. These were not new. Their excitement was found first and foremost in his prominence in proclaiming such conclusions. And secondly it was the detail and clarity with which Owen put forth his views in explicit opposition to the common paedobaptist covenantal paradigm of their age.[7] As a preacher to parliament, chaplain

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[2] Samuel Petto, *The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant Stated and Explained: With An Exposition of the Covenant of Grace in the Principal Concernments of it* (London: Eliz. Calvert, 1674), 84-85. On Petto, see Brown, *Christ and the Condition*.

[3] Petto, *The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant*, vii-viii.

[4] Petto, *The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant*, vi.

[5] Petto, *The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant*, vi-vii.

[6] Chris Caughey traces this line of thought in several of Owen's works as far back as 1650. Cf. Caughey, "Puritan Responses to Antinomianism," 109. On Owen's view of the Mosaic covenant as neither the covenant of works nor the covenant of grace, see Thomas Hicks Jr., "John Owen on the Mosaic Covenant," *Recovering a Covenantal Heritage: Essays in Baptist Covenant Theology*. ed. Richard C. Barcellos (Palmdale: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2014), 175-192.

[7] "John Owen formulated the nature of the Mosaic covenant and the relationship between the covenant of grace and the Mosaic covenant entirely differently" from the Westminster Assembly. Caughey, "Puritan Responses to Antinomianism," 109.

with Cromwell, and vice-chancellor of Oxford, if Owen's covenant theology could stand as a pillar among Reformed orthodoxy, then there was little that could be criticized or objected to in the Particular Baptists' own covenant theology.

To better understand Nehemiah Coxe's approval of John Owen's commentary on Hebrews, as well as Edward Hutchinson and Thomas Delaune's appropriation of earlier volumes of the same, one must appreciate the distinctives of Owen's covenantal thought relative to the developing diversity of the Reformed tradition and then compare the Particular Baptists to those distinctives.

The Logic of Matter and Form in Reformed Covenant Theology

By the time that Owen composed his commentaries on the book of Hebrews, the covenant theology of the Reformed tradition had developed and diversified significantly. As it grew, its vocabulary expanded to express greater intricacy and precision. Among the vocabulary of these many theologians, the terms "substance" and "administration" receive the majority of attention in historical theology. But there is another distinction, closely connected to this, that provides greater clarity regarding what various theologians believed about the covenants of Scripture. This is the distinction between matter and form as applied to covenant theology.

In the literature of covenant theology, matter was used interchangeably with substance to describe the dogmatic distinction between the law and the gospel as two mutually exclusive opposites.[8] As the doctrines of the law and the gospel were opposite in matter, kind, or substance, so also the covenants of works and grace based on the law and the gospel were opposite in matter, kind, or substance.

In the early stages of the development of covenant theology in the Reformed tradition, many theologians equated the law and the gospel with covenants. The law was a covenant; the gospel was a covenant. A comparison of early authors' definitions of the law and the gospel and the legal and evangelical covenants or the covenants of works and grace proves this point.[9]

Later theologians recognized that the Creator-creature distinction required further nuance in this area.[10] They used the distinction between matter and form to distinguish between a law and a covenant, and between a promise and a covenant. The matter of the covenant was a law or a promise. The form of the covenant was the completion of the

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[8] See Calvin and Olevianus in chapter 1. See also George Walker below.

[9] See Ursinus and Fenner in chapter 1.

[10] Cf. "There be some that doubt whether the meer *Moral Law* may not be a Covenant of Works." John Flavel, *Vindiciæ Legis & Fœderis: Or, A Reply to Mr. Philip Cary's Solemn Call* (London: M. Wotton, 1690), iii of an unpaginated section entitled "prolegomena."

covenant through the addition of rewards and threats combined with the consent of the parties covenanting.[11] The major English confessions of faith, for example, state that God's imposition of a law in Eden in no way entailed a reward for obedience to that law (WCF/SD/2LCF 7.1). Thus, a law alone could not be a covenant. So also, a promise without a solemnization of the offer of that promise was merely a promise, not a covenant. This is the same distinction as the matter and form of a covenant, but without the use of such terms.

Not all theologians used this exact terminology, but the logic behind it accounts for some of the tensions within Reformed covenant theology. One of the greatest difficulties that theologians faced was the fact that the law and the gospel appear together in the biblical covenants. It was necessary to determine, therefore, the role of the law and the gospel in a given covenant. This determined one's conclusions about how a given covenant related to the covenants of works and grace.

An examination of several theologians' approaches to the presence of the law and the gospel in the Mosaic covenant highlights the hermeneutics and diverse conclusions of Reformed covenant theology. It also provides a helpful contextual explanation for the Particular Baptists' hermeneutics and arguments as well as their appeal to John Owen.

George Walker (c. 1585-1651)[12] did not resolve the tension of the law and the gospel in the Mosaic covenant. He simply acknowledged them both by calling the Mosaic covenant a "Mixt" covenant wherein the covenants of works and grace ran side by side. He said, "For that Covenant is a mixt Covenant, partly of the Covenant of Workes, which is the Old Covenant, partly of the Covenant of Grace, which was made after the fall."[13] Later he stated,

> These Covenants differ in matter and substance. The matter and substance of the Covenant made by the Ministery of *Moses*, it was mixt, it was partly conditionall,

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[11] "The reason why I rather chuse to call the Law of the Ten Commandements the matter of the Covenant of works, than the Covenant it self, is because I conceive that the matter of it cannot properly be called the covenant of works, except the form be put upon it, that is to say, except the Lord require, and man undertake to yield perfect obedience thereunto, upon condition of eternall life and death: And therefore till then it was not a covenant of works betwixt God and all mankind in *Adam*. As for example, you know, that although a servant have an ability to do a masters work, and though a master have wages to bestow upon him for it, yet is there not a covenant betwixt them till they have thereupon agreed." Edward Fisher, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (London: R. Leybourn, 1646), 7-8. Cf. also "It is true Gods Law with its Sanction may be called his Covenant, before mans consent, as containing the matter of it; but it is most properly a Covenant when it is consented unto, having then also the form of a Covenant." John Barret, *God's Love to Man and Man's Duty towards God*, 4.

[12] On Walker, see David R. Como, 'Walker, George (bap. 1582?, d. 1651)', *ODNB*.

[13] Walker, *The Manifold Wisedome of God*, 67. This is similar to Robert Rollock's explanation of the Old Testament. See chapter 1.

> and partly absolute; partly legall, and partly Evangelicall; it required to justification both workes and faith, but after a divers manner, and it was a mixt Covenant of two divers Covenants, both the Covenant of Workes, and the Covenant of Grace.[14]

In the Mosaic covenant, for Walker, two dogmatically opposed covenants were mixed together.

Other theologians saw this as a contradiction and employed the distinction between matter and form to resolve it.[15] James Durham (1622-1658)[16] said,

> We would distinguish betwixt a law and a covenant, or betwixt this law considered as a law, and as a covenant. A law doth necessarily imply no more than, 1. To direct, 2. To command, inforcing that obedience by authority: A covenant does further necessarily imply promises made upon some condition, or threatenings added, if such a condition be not performed.

Later he said, "[The Ten Commandments] are a law having the matter, but not the form of the covenant of works."[17] For Durham, the Mosaic covenant made the covenant of works known to the Israelites by materially repeating the law, but the law was not given to Israel with a reward of righteousness through obedience. It was not a formal covenant of works.

Obadiah Sedgwick (1600?-1658)[18] responded to the objection "that *the Law given at Mount Sinai*, was a Covenant of works" by saying, "that the Law given on Mount *Sinai*, though *materially* it *respected works*, yet *formally* and *intentionally*, it *was not* then *given* and *established as a Covenant of works*."[19] For Sedgwick, the law was present and enforced, but not with a promise of reward for obedience to it.

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[14] Walker, *The Manifold Wisedome of God*, 133.

[15] Robert Baillie strongly disagreed with Walker. He said, "We did never deny the adjunction of ceremonies and temporall promises, and the whole covenant of works unto the covenant of grace under its first administration…but none of those adjuncts doe change the state and nature of the principall; it remains ever a covenant of pure grace without any mixture; it is neither in the whole, nor in any substantiall part turned into a covenant of works; it may not lose its denomination if it keeps its nature; it may neither be counted wholly a covenant of works, nor a mixed covenant of grace and works." Baillie, *Anabaptism*, 142.

[16] On Durham, see K. D. Holfelder, 'Durham, James (1622–1658)', *ODNB*.

[17] James Durham, *The Law Unsealed, Or a Practical Exposition of the Ten Commandments; With a Resolution of Several Momentous Questions and Cases of Consciences* (Edinburgh: Andrew Anderson, 1676, 4th edition), 5-6.

[18] On Sedgwick, see Barbara Donagan, 'Sedgwick, Obadiah (1599/1600–1658)', *ODNB*.

[19] Obadiah Sedgwick, *The Bowels of Tender Mercy Sealed in the Everlasting Covenant* (London: Edward Mottershed, 1661), 10.

William Bridge (c. 1600-1670)[20] answered similarly. Speaking of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace in the Mosaic covenant, Bridge commented,

> Both these covenants were at once in the Jewish Church, the one *declared*, and the *other made* with them; though *Hagar* was in the same house, yet it was in *subserviency unto Sarah*; and though the Covenant of works was declared, and was there at the same time, yet it was in subserviency unto the Covenant of Grace.[21]

This is a very important instance of the logic of matter and form. The covenant of works was "declared" to Israel, but the covenant of grace was "made" with Israel. The covenant of works was materially present through the law, but it was not the basis for a formal covenant with Israel.

Peter Bulkley (1583-1659)[22] made the same argument. He said, "I grant the Covenant of workes was then revealed and made knowne to the children of *Israel*, as being before almost obliterated and blotted out of mans heart, and therefore God renewed the knowledge of the Covenant of workes to them." He continued,

> But I adde withal, that the Law though it contain the sum of the Covenant of workes, yet was not delivered unto that people for this end, to stand between God and them as a Covenant of works, by which they should be justified and live, but onely as it was subservient and helpful unto them, to attaine the end of the former Covenant of grace.[23]

For Bulkley, the covenant of works was made known through the law but it was not given to Israel as a covenant of works. It was simply "revealed" to them in subservience to the covenant of grace.

When Reformed covenant theology is examined in light of its foundation in the law and the gospel, and when this foundation is traced through developments like the use of the distinction between matter and form, the unity and diversity of the tradition attains greater clarity. For some theologians, the Mosaic covenant was a covenant of works because it was materially established on an obligation of obedience coupled with rewards and threats. For others, the Mosaic covenant was the covenant of grace because it was a post-fall covenant and because it contained the promises of the gospel. The distinction between matter and form legitimized both interpretations because the gospel could be

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[20] On Bridge, see Greaves, 'Bridge, William (1600/01–1671)', *ODNB*.

[21] Bridge, *Christ and the Covenant*, 64.

[22] On Bulkley, see Michael McGiffert, 'Bulkeley, Peter (1583–1659)', *ODNB*.

[23] Peter Bulkley, *The Gospel Covenant Opened* (London: Tho. Parkhurst, 1674), 62-63.

located in a covenant not based on the gospel and the law could be located in a covenant not based on the law.

This diversity in covenant theology is evident in WCF/SD/2LCF 19.2. All three confessions of faith affirm that the same moral law given to Adam continued to be "a rule of life" after the fall. The authority of the moral law did not expire with the broken covenant of works. The confessions also affirm that the same moral law given to Adam was repeated at Mount Sinai. However, the Westminster Confession asserts that the moral law was given at Mount Sinai, "as such," that is, as a rule of life. The Savoy divines and the Baptist editors of their respective confessions of faith deleted the phrase "as such." The logic of matter and form accounts for this edit.

All three confessions agree that there is a continuity of law between Eden and Sinai. Materially, the law is present in the Mosaic covenant. But the Westminster Confession ruled out the possibility of the Mosaic covenant as a formal covenant of works by limiting the function of the law to a rule of life. The Savoyans and Baptists affirmed that the law remained a universal obligation for mankind as a rule of life, but were open to the possibility that the law was delivered at Sinai for the purpose of establishing a covenant based on obedience, a formal covenant of works with rewards and threats. The same hermeneutics were used, i.e., the logic of matter and form, but with differing conclusions based on the biblical data involved.

Later in the same chapter of the confessions, all three state that believers are under the same moral law as Adam, but not as a covenant of works for justification (WCF/SD/2LCF 19.6). So then, the Baptists and Savoyans did not treat any covenant in which the law appeared as a covenant of works, nor did they treat any covenant in which the gospel appeared as the covenant of grace. Everything depended on the biblical details of the covenants in question.

In this context, the distinctiveness of views like John Cameron's is more evident. Cameron's subservient covenant of obedience, distinct from the covenants of works and grace, was a *tertium quid*. Cameron was not forced to choose between a strict binary of the law and the gospel, covenantally, or to affirm a self-contradictory mixed covenant, like Walker.[24] One can understand why Samuel Bolton saw it as the key to resolve all the tensions present in Reformed covenant theology.

The Particular Baptists used typology to locate the gospel promises of the new covenant within the earthly legal covenants made with Israel. The covenant of grace was materially revealed in the Old Testament but not formally established until the death of Christ. This was not exclusive to the Baptists, but was a trend tracing back to Olevianus and Cameron. What was distinctively Baptist, and the ground of their practical separation from paedobaptist churches, was that they applied the same Reformed

[24] Some who disagreed with Cameron appealed to Galatians 4:24 to argue that the Mosaic covenant had to be the covenant of works or the covenant grace.

principles to the Abrahamic covenant. The law and the gospel were present in Genesis 17, but there the covenant of grace was materially declared while the covenant of circumcision was formally made.

Within the development of the diversity of Reformed covenant theology, theologians taught that a covenant can be materially "made known," "declared," or "revealed" but not formally "made." Some taught that the old covenant was a covenant materially and formally based on law, and thus substantially distinct from yet subservient to the covenant of grace. Some taught that the old covenant, in and of itself, concerned only earthly matters. For all the attempts to paint the Particular Baptists as Anabaptists and radicals, there was more of the Reformed family in the Particular Baptists than the paedobaptists wanted to admit. The importance of John Owen's covenant theology to the Baptists is that he defended many of their distinctives within the diversity of Reformed covenant theology. In particular, the Baptists saw their own views not just in Owen's model of the Mosaic covenant, but also in his teaching on the Abrahamic covenant.

The Logic of Matter and Form in John Owen's Covenant Theology

The logic of the distinction between matter and form was important in Owen's covenantal thought. Careful attention to his use of this language reveals that his covenant theology was remarkably similar to that of the Particular Baptists.

Owen applied the logic of matter and form to the covenant of works. He stated the general principle that "Where there is a *Law* concerning these things, and an agreement upon it, by all Parties concerned, there is a formal Covenant." He distinguished the two parts of this definition more precisely,

> As it was a *Law only*, so it proceeded from and was a consequent of the nature of God and man, with their mutual Relation unto one another. God being considered as the Creator, Governor, and Benefactor of man; and man as an intellectual Creature capable of moral Obedience…As *it was a Covenant*…that this *Law* of our Obedience should be a *formal compleat Covenant*, there was moreover some things required…First, By annexing unto it *Promises and Threatnings* of Reward and Punishment…Secondly, The *expression* of these Promises and Threatnings in external signs.[25]

Owen does not use the term "matter" in these instances, but employs the logic behind the terminology. A law, by itself, is not a covenant. It may be the material basis for a covenant, but threats, rewards, and external signs make it a formal covenant. As in chapter seven

[25] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 218.

of the confessions of faith, the covenant of works was not simply a set of commands, but a set of commands with attached rewards and threats.

In a similar manner, Owen distinguished the covenant of grace into a pre-messianic promise and a formal covenant established by the death of Christ. The covenant of grace considered "absolutely" was "virtually administred from the foundation of the world, in the way of a promise."[26] The promise of salvation was active from Genesis 3:15 onward. But, Owen added, "That which had invisibly in the way of a Promise put forth its efficacy under Types and Shadows, was now solemnly sealed, ratified and confirmed in the Death and Resurrection of Christ. It had before the confirmation of a Promise, which is an Oath; it had not the confirmation of a Covenant, which is blood."[27]

Owen explained further,

> This is that which gives any thing *the formal nature* of a Covenant or Testament. There may be a *Promise*, there may be an *Agreement* in general, which hath not the *formal nature* of a Covenant or Testament; and such was the Covenant of Grace before the death of Christ. But it is the *solemnity* and manner of the Confirmation, Dedication and Sanction of any Promise or Agreement that gives it the formal nature of a Covenant or Testament.[28]

Because the covenant of grace was a testament, it could not be considered as formally complete until it was established by the blood of the testator, Jesus Christ.[29] A promise alone did not constitute a covenant.[30]

Owen reduced all covenants to their promises, which made every covenant gracious, in a sense. "*There is infinite Grace in every Divine Covenant*, *inasmuch as it is established on Promises*."[31] Particular Baptists used this same argument to counter the claim that all post-

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[26] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 220. Owen's statements presents afresh the problems of the language of substance and administration. In context, Owen is arguing that the new covenant is not the old covenant. He is affirming that the benefits of the new covenant were administered in the old covenant through promises. But he is denying that the old covenant's ordinances were the administration of the covenant of grace.

[27] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 221.

[28] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 237.

[29] Cf. Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 251. "A Testament…is the proper signification of the word here used by the Apostle…and nothing else."

[30] Owen stated that the promise of the covenant of grace given to Adam "included in it the nature of a *Covenant*, vertually requiring a re-stipulation unto *obedience* in them who by faith come to have an interest therein." Owen, *Exercitations*, 54.

[31] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 223. Owen reiterated on page 242 that after the fall it was "an Act of Soveraign Grace and Mercy" to make the Mosaic covenant with Israel.

fall covenants are the covenant of grace.[32] It was the nature of the promises of a given covenant that had to be examined, Owen and the Baptists argued. For example, the promises of the covenants of works and grace were "*diametrically* opposite."[33] Though both covenants were founded on promises, the promises of the covenant of grace were "efficaciously assumptive," but not "remunerative." The promises of the covenant of works were remunerative, "respecting an antecedent Obedience in us."[34]

Owen's precision extended even to the common argument used by paedobaptists to equate the Abrahamic and new covenants. Many of the Particular Baptists' opponents appealed to the phrase "I will be their God, and they will be my people" to connect Genesis 17 and Jeremiah 31. The Particular Baptists replied that this was a general covenant formula, and the specific promises of the covenant had to be brought into consideration. Here again, Owen was their ally. He said, "This is the general expression of any Covenant-relation between God and men; *He will be unto them a God, and they shall be a people unto him*. And it is frequently made use of with respect unto the first Covenant, which yet was disannulled."[35] For Owen, this covenantal formula was used in the Mosaic covenant, a covenant that did not promise salvation in itself; thus the covenant of grace could not be reduced to this promise.

Owen's insistence on a careful analysis of covenants based on their promises, and his use of the logic of matter and form in the covenants of works and grace, provided the method for his interpretation of the difference between the old and new covenants as found in Hebrews 8:6. It permitted him to classify the old covenant as a covenant formally based on law and works while at the same time to affirm that the covenant of grace was materially made known through the promises of the gospel. As he himself put it, believers were saved "under" the old covenant, but not "by" the old covenant.

Many Reformed divines employed the logic of matter and form to prove that the Mosaic covenant was the covenant of grace. Owen, however, employed the same logic with opposite conclusions, hence the Particular Baptists' appreciation and appropriation of his work. His views of the old and new covenants are very similar to John Cameron's promised/promulgated new covenant and subservient old covenant. Cameron argued that because the covenant of grace offered the work of a Mediator, it could only be promised until the Mediator arrived and established or promulgated the foundation of his mediation. It was no coincidence that paedobaptists connected Cameron's thought to Christopher Blackwood's comment that the new covenant was promised, but not covenanted in Genesis 17. Whether it was Christopher Blackwood and John Cameron in

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[32] Cf. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 93; Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 9-10.

[33] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 219.

[34] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 223.

[35] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 278.

the 1640s or Nehemiah Coxe and John Owen in the 1680s, the Particular Baptists identified with a consistent branch of Reformed covenant theology.

The Old Covenant

Hebrews 8:6 states that Jesus was a mediator of a better covenant, the new covenant. Owen launched into his examination of the old and new covenants on the premise that "It is supposed that there was *another Covenant*, whereof the Lord Christ was not the Mediator."[36] The covenant of which Jesus was not the mediator was the old covenant, the covenant made with Israel through Moses, a covenant of works for life in Canaan. The old covenant was not the covenant of works made with Adam, nor was it the covenant of grace. But it repeated the former and subserved the latter.

The old covenant was not the covenant of works because it had "*No promise of…eternal life*, no otherwise but as it was contained in the promise of the Covenant of Works." Rather, it "Had promises of temporal things in the Land of *Canaan*."[37] Owen was quite clear that the old covenant did not have "any Promise of eternal Life annexed unto it, as such, but only the Promise inseparable from the Covenant of Works which it revived, *saying*, *Do this and live*."[38] This seems to be a contradiction, but Owen meant that the old covenant republished the covenant of works yet it was not the covenant of works.

The purpose of the republication of the covenant of works in the Mosaic covenant was to subserve the promises of the gospel by declaring "The *impossibility of obtaining Reconciliation and Peace with God*, any other way but by the Promise." By "Representing the Commands of the Covenant of Works…[the old covenant] convinced men that this was no way for Sinners to seek for Life and Salvation." The Mosaic covenant did not replace the covenant of works or subvert the covenant of grace as a new way of righteous obedience. "It did neither *abrogate the first Covenant of Works*, and come in the room thereof, *nor disannul the Promise* made unto *Abraham*."[39]

Owen knew that he was dealing with a key question in covenant theology. "Here then ariseth a difference of no small importance, namely, whether these are indeed *two distinct Covenants, as to the essence and substance of them, or only different ways of the dispensation and*

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[36] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 218.

[37] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 237. The old covenant was "not the *Covenant of Works* made with *Adam*, and his whole Posterity in him, concerning which there is no difference or difficulty, whether it be a distinct Covenant from the New or no." Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 227.

[38] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 229. The old covenant "revived, declared and expressed *all the Commands of that Covenant in the Decalogue*…It revived the *Sanction of the first Covenant* in the *Curse* or Sentence of Death which it denounced against all Transgressors…It revived the Promise of that Covenant, that of *eternal Life upon perfect Obedience*…Now this is no other but the Covenant of Works revived."

[39] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 230.

administration of the same Covenant."[40] He was likewise aware that his view contradicted the more popular covenantal system of his day. "The judgment of most *Reformed Divines* is…they are not to be said to be under *another Covenant*, but only a *different administration* of it."[41]

In such a view, as repeated many times in this work, the difference between the old and new covenants was reduced to two outward sets of ordinances and degrees of clarity in revelation. This was insufficient and unscriptural, for Owen. "The Scripture doth plainly and expressly make mention of *two Testaments or Covenants*, and distinguish between them in such a way, as what is spoken can hardly be accommodated unto a *twofold Administration* of the same Covenant."[42] In this, Owen agreed with John Ball's assessment that the subservient covenant, and any covenantal paradigm that considered the old covenant to be a covenant of works, was inconsistent with the covenant theology expressed in the Westminster Confession.[43] This is the substance logic of the law and the gospel. A covenant materially based on law cannot be a covenant materially based on grace.

For Owen, there was freedom to disagree with the description of the covenant of grace in two administrations so long as the continuity of salvation was preserved. "Wherefore we must grant *two distinct Covenants*, rather than a twofold Administration of the same Covenant meerly, to be intended. We must I say do so, provided always that the way of Reconciliation and Salvation was the same under both."[44]

To justify his interpretation of the text, Owen assigned a typological identity and function to the old covenant. Like John Cameron, Owen appealed to "The relation of Type and Antitype" to describe the relationship between the old and new covenants. Owen affirmed that types were not antitypes in lesser forms. They had a "different nature." Specifically, "All the *Levitical* Services and Ordinances were in themselves carnal, and

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[40] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 224, 226. For this view, Owen referred the reader to Calvin, Vermigli, and Bucanus.

[41] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 225. Owen claimed that the Lutherans held to a different view than the majority of the Reformed. "The *Lutherans* on the other side insist…that *not a twofold Administration of the same Covenant*, but that *two Covenants* substantially distinct, are intended." Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 226.

[42] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 228. "This is the *nature and substance* of that Covenant which God made with that People; a *particular temporary Covenant* it was, and not a meer dispensation of the Covenant of Grace." Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 235.

[43] Of Cameron, Ball said "By this explication it appears, the Divines of this opinion, make the old Covenant differ from the new in substance, and kind, and not in degree of manifestation." Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 95. Referring to other theologians who identified the old covenant with the law, Ball said "How all these differences should stand, if they be not Covenants opposite in kind, it is not easy to understand." Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 96.

[44] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 228.

had carnal ends assigned unto them, and had only an obscure representation of things spiritual and eternal."[45] Owen called this a "Typical Church State, with a great number of Religious Laws and Ordinances, in themselves *carnal* and *weak*, but mystically significant of spiritual and heavenly things."[46] Thus, "The Old Covenant was *typical, shadowy* and *removeable*, Heb. 10.1. The New Covenant is *substantial* and *permanent*, as containing *the Body which is Christ*."[47]

Through typology, the old covenant portrayed salvation in Jesus Christ, but it did not offer salvation in Jesus Christ in and of itself. Owen distinguished between being saved "under" the old covenant, and "by vertue" of the old covenant, affirming the former and denying the latter. "If *Reconciliation and Salvation by Christ* were to be obtained not only *under the Old Covenant*, but *by vertue thereof*, then it must be the same for substance with the New. But this is not so; for no Reconciliation with God, nor Salvation could be obtained by vertue of the Old Covenant, or the Administration of it."[48] Owen was simply acknowledging the argument of Hebrews that animal blood could not forgive sins, thus the old covenant could not purify the conscience or perfect its members.

Owen's typological interpretation of the old covenant was precisely what the Particular Baptists had been teaching for decades. "The spiritual benefit which was obtained under it, proceeded from the *promise*, and not from *the efficacy of the Law*, or the Covenant made at *Sinai*." In itself, the old covenant was "legal and carnal, and had respect only unto outward things."[49] Salvation was available in the Old Testament through the promises of the covenant of grace which were made known through typology.[50] Nevertheless, the types were not the antitypes. "The substance of what God intended in all his worship was not contained nor comprised in the services of those priests. There were some lines and shadows, to represent the body, but the body itself was not there. There was something above them and beyond them, which they reached not unto."[51] Thus the old covenant and the new, though closely connected through typology, were not the same thing. They were not one in substance. And their differences could not be

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[45] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 375.

[46] Owen, *Exercitations Concerning the Name, Original, Nature, Use, and Continuance of a Day of Sacred Rest* (London: R.W., 1671), 230. I am indebted to Chris Caughey for this reference.

[47] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 241.

[48] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 228.

[49] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 287.

[50] "*The New Covenant as recollecting into one all the Promises of Grace given from the foundation of the World, accomplished in the actual exhibition of Christ, and confirmed in his death, and by the Sacrifice of his blood, thereby becoming the sole Rule of new spiritual Ordinances of Worship suited thereunto, was the great Object of the Faith of the Saints of the Old Testament, and is the great foundation of all our present mercies.*" Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 252.

[51] Owen, *An Exposition*, 204.

reduced to external administrational changes.[52] The shadow was not the substance. One can almost hear the Particular Baptists adding their "Amen."

The New Covenant

In John Owen's covenant theology, the old covenant was not the new covenant because the old covenant did not forgive sins. It portrayed the forgiveness of sins typologically, but it did not proffer forgiveness in itself. In addition to this, the old covenant was not the new because the new covenant, or covenant of grace, existed only as a promise before the death of Christ the Mediator.

As cited above, Owen appealed to the testamentary nature of the covenant to prove that until the blood of the testator was shed, the covenant had not yet been formally established or sanctioned. His words are clear,

> Absolutely under the Old Testament, it consisted *only in a Promise*, and as such only is proposed in the Scripture, *Acts* 2.39. *Hebr.* 6.14, 15, 16. The Apostle indeed says, that the *Covenant was confirmed of God in Christ*; *before the giving of the Law*, Gal. 3.17. And so it was not absolutely in itself, but in the Promise and Benefits of it. The *nomethesia*, or full legal establishment of it, whence it became *formally a Covenant* unto the whole Church, was future only, and a Promise under the Old Testament.

He added, "It wanted its *solemn confirmation* and establishment by the blood of the only Sacrifice which belonged unto it. Before this was done in the death of Christ, it had not the *formal nature* of a Covenant or a Testament, as our Apostle proves, *Chap*. 9.15-23."[53]

Owen acknowledged that the covenant of grace was called a covenant many times in the Old Testament, but he insisted that it was a case of the part standing for the whole. The promises were sure, and looked forward to a certain completion of the covenant. "The name of a Covenant is indeed sometimes applied unto the Promises of Grace before or under the Old Testament. But the word used in all those places, denoteth only *a free*, *gratuitous Promise*, Gen. 9.9. Chap. 17.4." Again, the testamentary form of the new covenant was the controlling factor for Owen. He continued, "But they were none of them, nor all of them together, reduced into the form of *a Testament*; which they could not

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[52] The ordinances of the old covenant belonged to "*another Covenant*" that was "superadded unto the Promises." It functioned as "the immediate Rule of the Obedience and Worship of the Church. And according unto their observance of this *superadded Covenant*, they were esteemed to have kept or broken Covenant with God. This was the *Old Covenant in Sinai*." Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 252.

[53] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 227.

be, but by the *death of the Testator*."[54] Only the covenant dedicated in the blood of Jesus, the covenant that forgives sins, could be the new covenant, the covenant of grace.

The way in which Owen articulated the difference between the old and new covenants was welcomed by Particular Baptists not only because it contradicted the popular paradigm of covenant theology against which they argued, but also because it supported their arguments against infant baptism on the grounds of positive law. Owen himself connected the two ideas. "[The new covenant] is neither a Renovation of [the old] Covenant, nor a Reformation of it, but utterly of another nature, by whose introduction and establishment that other was to be abolished, abrogated and taken away, with all the Divine Worship and Service which was peculiar thereunto."[55] The typological nature of the old covenant as substantially distinct from the new, as well as the abrogation and removal of the same, leads in turn to tensions and questions of consistency and coherence in Owen's covenantal thought.

Tensions in John Owen's Covenant Theology

From their beginning, the Particular Baptists argued that a consistent application of common Reformed principles yielded their own conclusions, repeatedly appealing to Reformed authors either to point out an area of overlap or contradiction. They saw their theology as resolving tensions within Reformed theology itself. There were significant areas of overlap between the Particular Baptists and Owen, making him the ideal candidate for proving and legitimizing their arguments to other paedobaptists. But Owen's paedobaptism meant that however much the Particular Baptists appropriated his covenant theology, there would always be a degree of discontinuity and discrepancy between the two. The tensions in Owen's covenant theology stem primarily from variances in his treatments of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants.

The Covenant of Grace and the Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic covenant was the recurring battleground of covenantal polemics between the Particular Baptists and the paedobaptists. It was precisely in this area where Owen's covenant theology opened itself not just to confusion and tension, but also to Particular Baptist appropriation.

Owen stated that prior to the death of Christ, the covenant of grace existed only as a promise. Because it was a testament, it could not be confirmed until the testator died. This raises the question of how the Abrahamic covenant can be called the covenant of grace. Owen spoke of the covenant of grace in the same way when discussing its revelation to

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[54] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 252.

[55] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 264.

Adam and Abraham—it was a promise. He said, "By [the new] Covenant as here considered, is not understood the promise of grace given unto *Adam* absolutely; nor that unto *Abraham*, which contained the substance and matter of it, the grace exhibited in it, but not the compleat Form of it as a Covenant."[56] His words indicate that while the covenant of grace was delivered sufficiently for salvation, it was still just a promise.

But in other comments, Owen said that "The *Promise given and sworn unto Abraham*, which is expressly called the Covenant of God…had the whole nature of a Covenant in it, with a solemn outward Seal appointed for its confirmation and establishment."[57] This is a very important statement because Owen connected circumcision with the covenant of grace.[58] The Abrahamic covenant, then, was the covenant of grace in promise form, with an outward seal—circumcision.

Yet Owen also said, "When the New Covenant was given out only in the way of a *Promise*, it did not introduce a *Worship and Priviledges* expressive of it."[59] When Owen spoke in this way of the ordinances of the old covenant, his meaning was clear. The earthly ordinances had an earthly use and meaning, which typologically functioned to reveal a separate antitypical heavenly meaning. If the covenant of grace had an outward seal, circumcision, but did not have a worship and privileges expressive of it, then one is left wondering whether circumcision was the seal of the covenant of grace primarily, or secondarily.

Owen's expression lends itself to interpreting the function of circumcision in the Abrahamic covenant much the same way as the ordinances of the old covenant. In fact, Owen seems to say this very thing. "When God renewed the *Promise* of it unto *Abraham*, he is said to *make a Covenant* with him, and he did so, but it was with respect unto other things, especially the proceeding of the promised Seed from his loins."[60] The Particular Baptists affirmed that through the ordinances of the Old Testament, believers participated in the covenant of grace. But they clarified that the new covenant had ordinances "proper, and peculiar to it self."[61] The old covenant ordinances were earthly

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[56] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 256.

[57] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 220. Commenting on Hebrews 6:13, Owen said that the promise was "for the substance of it" made with Abraham in Genesis 12, "and this same Promise was confirmed unto him by way of a *Covenant*" in Genesis 15, and "more solemnly" in Genesis 17." Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 136.

[58] Elsewhere, Owen explicitly connected the opening of Genesis 17 with the covenant of grace. While still a promise, the covenant of grace "included in it the nature of a *Covenant*, vertually requiring a re-stipulation unto *obedience* in them who by faith come to have an interest therein…Hence in the following Explications of the *Promise*, this condition of *Obedience* is expressly added. So upon its renewal unto *Abraham*, God required that he should *walk before him and be upright*. This *Promise* then…was from the first giving of it, the foundation of the *Church*, and the whole Worship of God therein." Owen, *Exercitations*, 54.

[59] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 221.

[60] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 227.

[61] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 84.

ordinances that pointed to heavenly realities outside and beyond themselves. Owen articulated this view of the ordinances of the Mosaic covenant as a "Typical Church State" very clearly. His comments on the Abrahamic covenant seem to do the same and thus present a significant tension.

The tension is in the application of typology. Owen's reduction of the Abrahamic covenant to an earthly level of promises that "contained" the substance of the covenant of grace, but not the "compleat form," was nearly identical to the Particular Baptists' explanation of the same biblical material. Whereas Owen clearly distinguished the covenant of grace from the Mosaic covenant in substance, Owen seemed to articulate and defend the premises used by the Particular Baptists to reach the same conclusion regarding the relation of the covenant of grace to the Abrahamic covenant. In fact, Owen set up the premises used by the Particular Baptists to reach the conclusion that the covenant of grace was made known to Abraham, but was distinct from the covenant of circumcision.

Two Levels of People and Promises

Not only did Owen's comments on the nature of the covenant of grace as a yet-to-be-established testament create tension with his statements about the Abrahamic covenant as a complete covenant, but also his distinction between two levels operative within the Abrahamic covenant did the same. In so doing, Owen's treatment of the Abrahamic covenant closely resembled his treatment of the old and new covenants. Owen called the old covenant "*typical, shadowy* and *removeable*" but the new covenant "*substantial* and *permanent*."[62] The promise of grace was obtained under the old covenant, but not by the old covenant. In the Abrahamic covenant, as well, Owen distinguished a temporal typical level from a spiritual eternal level. The difference, of course, and the very source of the tension, was that Owen concluded that the old covenant was substantially distinct from the covenant of grace, a conclusion not attributed to the two levels of the Abrahamic covenant.

In his first volume on Hebrews, Owen distinguished "a double seed allotted to [Abraham]. A seed according to the flesh, separated to the bringing forth of the Messiah…and a seed according to the promise, that is, such as by faith have an interest in the promise, or all the elect of God."[63] This distinction in his first volume on Hebrews correlates with his interpretation in his third volume concerning the house of Israel and Judah in Jeremiah 31 as "the whole entire Posterity of *Abraham*" or as "they were *typical*, and mystically significant of the whole Church of God."[64]

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[62] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 241.

[63] Owen, *Exercitations*, 55.

[64] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 255.

The Particular Baptists assigned these two groups of people to two different covenants, an earthly typical covenant for life in Canaan, and the covenant of grace. Owen did not make this distinction, but he distinguished the ways in which the covenant was made with these two seeds. In the first sense, the covenant was made with Israel and Judah according to the flesh with the promise that the Messiah was to be born from them, the ratification of the covenant (Christ's death) was to occur among them, the gospel was to be announced first to them, and because by their sons (the Apostles) the new covenant was to be carried to the nations.[65]

In the second sense, referring to "*The whole Church of elect Believers*," Owen stated that "These are they alone…with whom the Covenant is really made and established, and unto whom the grace of it is actually communicated."[66] He had made the same point when discussing Abraham's twofold seed in his first volume on Hebrews, "The Church unto whom all the *Promises* belong, are only those who are Heirs of *Abrahams* Faith; believing as he did, and thereby interested in his Covenant."[67] This was where Hutchinson and Delaune saw a necessary consequence in Owen's thought. The only members of the covenant, i.e., the only members of the church, were believers.

Not only did Owen distinguish between a twofold seed in Abraham's covenant, he likewise distinguished the promise given to Abraham two ways. First, he distinguished it "As it *was personal unto Abraham*." And second, he distinguished it "As it regards all the *Elect of God*." In the first sense, the promise was "*Carnal*, *Temporal*, and *Typical*." In the second sense, the promise was "*Spiritual* and *Eternal*." The second sense was "typed out by those other things."[68]

Owen correlated the two levels of the promise to the two seeds. The natural offspring of Abraham received carnal, temporal, and typical promises, designed to bring forth the Messiah. The spiritual offspring of Abraham, "of whom Abraham was the Representative" received the Messiah by faith, following the pattern and example of Abraham's faith.[69] The first seed and its privileges ceased at the coming of Christ. "It is therefore with respect unto *all Believers* absolutely, that God confirmed the Promise…though the natural Seed of *Abraham* was respected in the first place, until they cut off themselves by their Unbelief."[70]

In the case of the old covenant, Owen used the same hermeneutics of two-tiered typology but with entirely different conclusions. The Particular Baptists saw this difference as a tension, a contradiction. Types were not antitypes. Shadows were not

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 256.

[67] Owen, *Exercitations*, 56.

[68] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 138.

[69] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 140. As noted in the previous chapter, Owen clarified that one could be a participant in both levels at the same time.

[70] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 159.

substances. In Owen's thought, the old covenant governed Abraham's earthly seed in Canaan. The Particular Baptists extended the borders of the old covenant back to when Canaan was originally promised to Abraham's earthly seed, the Abrahamic covenant. Because of Owen's detailed argument regarding the nature of the old covenant, and given his twofold distinctions in the Abrahamic covenant, the change to a Particular Baptist model required only a slight adjustment of his views. If the abrogated people, promises, and commands of the outward earthly level of Abraham's covenant were actually a distinct covenant, the covenant of circumcision, then the most foundational argument for infant baptism was undone.

The Unbreakable Effectual New Covenant and its Outward Breakable Administration

The resolution to some of these tensions, albeit a questionable resolution, is that Owen's model of the covenant of grace contained an outward breakable administration. The "carnal seed" of the Abrahamic covenant possessed only the "*outward dispensation* of the Covenant."[71] The issue becomes whether that "outward dispensation" was a distinct earthly covenant of works, what the Particular Baptists would call the covenant of circumcision.

Added to an already complicated system was Owen's dogmatic explanation of how the new covenant is made.

> The *making of this Covenant* may be considered two ways. 1. As unto the *preparation and proposition of its terms and conditions*. 2. As unto the *internal stipulation between God and the souls of men*. In this sense alone God is properly said to make this Covenant with any. The preparation and proposition of Laws is not the making of the Covenant. And therefore all with whom this Covenant is made, are effectually sanctified, justified and saved.[72]

If Israel according to the flesh possessed the "outward dispensation" of the covenant in the sense that the promises of the gospel were proposed to them, but they did not have personal faith in those promises, then the covenant was not properly made with them. Stating the case strongly, Owen said "as unto *persons* it is really extended unto none, but those in whom these effects are produced, whatever be its outward administration."[73] The tension is felt in that "Although the Covenant of Grace be stable and effectual unto all who are really partakers of it, yet as unto its external administration, and our entering

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[71] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 256.

[72] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 275. "Properly" refers to the strict definition of a thing.

[73] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 276.

into it by a visible profession, it may be broken unto the temporal and eternal ruine of Persons and whole Churches."[74] Many are to be baptized. Only some are true believers. This model was consistent with Particular Baptist ecclesiology, but the tension is in the question of how the two senses of Owen's covenant-making, proposition and response, can apply to infants.

Driving Owen's logic was his interpretation of the new covenant in Hebrews. It forgives the sins of all of its members. "*Persons destitute of this saving knowledge, are utter strangers unto the Covenant of Grace*. For this is a principal promise and effect of it, wherever it doth take place."[75] Indeed, "*All* those absolutely, and *only* those with whom God makes this Covenant, are intended. Those *whose sins are not pardoned*, do in no sense partake of this Covenant, it is not made with them."[76] Furthermore, "They are all *actually pardoned* with whom this Covenant is made. And the indefinite *declaration* of the nature and terms of the Covenant, is not the *making of a Covenant* with any."[77] To summarize Owen's statements, those who merely hear the promises of the covenant, but do not believe them, are "utter strangers unto the Covenant of Grace," and "in no sense partake of this Covenant" because it is not made with them.

Owen emphasized this point because it was a key difference between the old and new covenants.

> Those with whom the Old Covenant was made, were all of them actual Partakers of the benefits of it; and if they are not so with whom the New is made, it comes short of the Old in efficacy, and may be utterly frustrate. Neither doth the *indefinite Proposal* of the terms of the Covenant prove that the Covenant is made with them, or any who enjoy not the benefits of it. Indeed this is the *excellency* of this Covenant, and so it is here declared, that it doth effectually communicate all the grace and mercy contained in it unto all and every one with whom it is made; whoever it is made withall, his sins are pardoned.[78]

The only logical conclusion is that the covenant is not "really" made with those who do not have faith in Christ. This is further complicated by Owen's statement that the new covenant cannot be broken. "That Covenant was *broken*, but this shall *never be so*, because provision is made in the Covenant itself against any such event."[79]

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[74] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 265.
[75] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 289.
[76] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 290.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 291.
[79] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 266.

This places Owen's external dispensation of the covenant to the carnal seed of Abraham in a precarious position. And here his comments on abrogation come into play. The privileges of Abraham's natural seed ceased with the coming of Christ.[80] And the new covenant abrogated the old and its ordinances, which was a "Typical Church State." If the carnal seed's privileges and the ordinances of the old covenant's typical church state ceased, and if the new covenant church consisted only of believers, Abraham's spiritual seed, the place of the infants of believers could be, at best, an external dispensation of the covenant of grace. That is the place Owen assigns to them, as "being received as a *part and branches* of a Family whereupon the blessing of *Abraham* was come, and to whom the *Promises of the Covenant* was extended."[81]

In his treatise on ecclesiology, *The True Nature of a Gospel Church and its Government*, Owen expressed a doctrine of the church that included the concept of visible saints. Owen said, "*Regeneration* is expressly required in the Gospel, to give a Right and Privilege unto an entrance into the Church or Kingdom of Christ." He added, "Of this Regeneration *Baptism* is the *Symbol*…Wherefore unto those who are in a due manner partakers of it, it giveth all the external Rights and Privileges which belong unto them that are *Regenerate*."[82] Baptism, a symbol of actual regeneration, grants external rights and privileges in the church.

Yet for Owen, the baptism of infants was an external breakable covenant. The children of believers remain in the church, "Until they come unto such Seasons, wherein the *personal* performance of those duties whereon the continuation of the estate of visible Regeneration doth depend, is required of them. Herein if they fail, they lose all privilege and benefit by their baptism."[83] Quoted above, Owen said, "as unto its external administration, and our entering into it by a visible profession, it may be broken unto the temporal and eternal ruine of Persons and whole Churches."[84]

On the one hand, Owen claimed that all unbelievers were "utter strangers" to the covenant and they "in no sense partake of this Covenant." On the other hand, he said "Children belong unto, and have an Interest in their *Parents Covenant*; not only in the promise of it, which give them Right unto *Baptism*; but in the Profession of it in the *Church Covenant*, which gives them a Right unto all the Privileges of the Church, whereof they are capable, until they voluntarily relinquish their claim unto them."[85] Owen even

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[80] Owen, *Exercitations*, 56.

[81] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 32. Owen appealed to Jesus' blessing of the little children in Mark 10:16 to show that Jesus "Owned *little Children* to belong to his Covenant." One wonders how this comports with his statements about the unbelieving being "utter strangers" to the covenant of grace.

[82] Owen, *The True Nature of a Gospel Church and Its Government* (London: William Marshall, 1688), 3.

[83] Owen, *The True Nature of a Gospel Church*, 3.

[84] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 265.

[85] Owen, *The True Nature of a Gospel Church*, 16.

admitted that "Neither the Church nor its Privileges be continued and preserved as of old, by *carnal generation*." But his justification of infant baptism was based on "the nature of the Dispensation of God's Covenant, wherein he hath promised to be a *God unto Believers and their Seed*."[86]

These tensions are reflected in Owen's congregational ecclesiology. "Persons baptized in their Infancy ought to be instructed in the fundamental principles of Religion, and make profession of their own Faith and Repentance before they are admitted into the *Society of the Church*."[87] By Owen's logic of how the covenant of grace is made, and by his logic of who actually constitutes the church, baptizing the children of believers did not necessarily mean that the covenant of grace was made with them, nor that they were true members of the church. The gospel promise was given to them and placed them in an external breakable covenant. Yet Owen had said, "as unto *persons* [the new covenant] is really extended unto none, but those in whom these effects are produced, whatever be its outward administration."[88]

It is not clear how a perfectly and unfailingly effectual covenant that is made only with the elect can be the same covenant as an external breakable covenant made with households. Breaking the covenant becomes a failure to believe the gospel proclaimed in baptism. But if baptism declares the objective realities of the covenant, and if the declaration of the covenant is not the making of the covenant, then unbelieving children can be said to reject the covenant but not to break the covenant. The covenantal promise was proposed to them in baptism, but the covenant was not made with them because when the promise of the covenant was stipulated, they did not restipulate faith. And thus their unbelief before the gospel message in baptism would not only be obvious, because they are infants, but it would also be identical to the unbelief of any individual confronted by the gospel message in any form. The external breakable administration of the covenant becomes meaningless at that point.

All of these tensions stem from Owen's refusal to sort the seeds of Abraham into distinct covenants. What Owen described as the "external dispensation" of the covenant of grace was, in the Particular Baptists' thought, the covenant of circumcision. It was the old covenant, a typical temporary covenant of works for life in Canaan granted to Abraham and all of his natural offspring. The covenant of grace was materially revealed to Abraham, but the covenant of circumcision was formally made with him.

In John Owen's mature thought, then, infant baptism represents a significant tension. As Crawford Gribben put it, Owen's "ongoing clarification of covenant theology and his enduring commitment to a visible saints ecclesiology meant that this was a practice which

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[86] Owen, *The True Nature of a Gospel Church*, 17.

[87] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 33.

[88] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 276.

was increasingly out of step with his presuppositions, and increasingly lacking in theological rationale."[89]

Conclusion

In the context of the diversity of Reformed covenant theology, the logic of the distinction between matter and form accounts for disparate conclusions based on shared hermeneutics. The law and the gospel were present in the post-fall covenants, but for varying reasons and purposes. In this context of diversity, the distinctives of John Owen's covenant theology were extremely similar, and in many cases identical, to the Particular Baptists on key points and in key ways.

Owen distinguished the seed of Abraham into a natural seed and believers. He acknowledged that God's promise to be God to a people was not necessarily the substance of the covenant of grace. He employed typology as the Particular Baptists did, on two substantially distinct levels. He asserted a substantial difference between the old and new covenants, rejecting the common covenantal paradigm used to refute the Particular Baptists. He reduced the covenant of grace to an effectual promise of salvation in the Old Testament, a promise that did not have its own ordinances of "spiritual worship." He argued that the covenant of grace was "really" and "properly" made only with the elect. He taught that everyone in the new covenant experiences forgiveness of sins. He contended that the bare announcement of the covenant was not the making of the covenant. And he drew the lines of church membership at visible profession of faith.

But Owen's covenant theology contained tensions. He did not apply typology equally between the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants. His articulation of the two seeds of Abraham, the way in which the covenant was made with both, and his statements about the abrogation of the national carnal privileges seemed to pave the way for a Baptist ecclesiology. Indeed, Owen's congregational ecclesiology came very close to this. Despite these tensions, he continued to maintain infant baptism in a breakable external administration. Owen therefore illustrates that there was only a minor difference of adjustment between his covenant theology and that of the Particular Baptists. His explanation of the Abrahamic covenant needed only a consistent conclusion in order for the alignment to become complete.

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[89] Gribben, "John Owen, Baptism, and the Baptists," in *By Common Confession: Essays in Honor of James M. Renihan* (ed. Richard Barcellos, Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2015), 70. This essay also includes a helpful discussion of the development of Owen's view of baptism, as well as expressions of caution about the context and content of a work posthumously attributed to Owen and published as "*Of Infant Baptism and Dipping*."

Chapter Six: Nehemiah Coxe

Introduction

Nehemiah Coxe (bap. 22 March, 1650–5 May, 1689) was born to Benjamin Coxe in early 1650.[1] The Parish Register of St. Paul's church in Bedford records on 22 March, "Bap Nehimia the sonn of Binamin Cox."[2] Nehemiah's early life was likely spent with his father as Benjamin worked in the Abingdon Association and later in London. At some point, however, Nehemiah returned to Bedford and worked as a cordwainer, making shoes.

Nehemiah joined John Bunyan's church on 14 May, 1669 and served as an informal teacher.[3] On 21 December, 1671 he was recognized as a "gifted brother," an office of teaching without the duties of pastoral responsibility.[4] This was the same day that Bunyan himself was ordained pastor of the church.[5] Nehemiah's name appears regularly with the deacons and pastors in the church's official business and correspondence. Despite his usefulness there, he did not remain in Bedford.

In 1675 Nehemiah accepted a call to the pastorate from the prominent Petty France church in London where his father had worked in years past. In the Record Book of that church, on 21 September it states, "bro: Collins & Bro: Coxe were solemnely ordained pastors or elders in this church."[6] Brother Collins was William Collins (c.1644-30 October, 1702), a graduate of the famous Westminster School.[7] As described above, it was not long

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[1] Nehemiah's approximate age is further confirmed by his marriage allegation in July, 1686 which labels him "about the age of 37." He could have been born in late 1649. Lambeth Palace Library, VM I/14, Marriage Allegation of Nehemiah Cox and Margaret Smith, 5 July, 1686. They were married by license three days later at St. Giles, Cripplegate. LMA P69/GIS/A/002/MS06419/010, Parish register of St. Giles Cripplegate, 1680-1688.

[2] Bedfordshire and Luton Archives, P1/1/3, Bedford Parish Register. The original unadjusted date was 1649. Benjamin probably baptized Nehemiah to avoid trouble with local authorities. Richard Tidmarsh did the same in Oxford some years later. The parish minister, John Bradshaw, was sympathetic to nonconformity and was ejected in 1662. He had ties to the Bunyan church and may have assisted Benjamin in this matter.

[3] In 1670, Nehemiah was arrested for teaching at a meeting of Bunyan's church. He was charged with saying that the Church of England in its present form was not a true church of Christ. He was released the following year. Bedfordshire and Luton Archives, HSA 1671/W/84, Deposition, May 15, 1670.

[4] H. G. Tibbutt, ed., *The Minutes of the First Independent Church (now Bunyan Meeting) at Bedford 1656-1766* (Luton: Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 1976), 40.

[5] Tibbutt, *Bunyan Meeting*, 72. On Coxe's relationship with John Bunyan, see Anne Dunan-Page, *Grace Overwhelming* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2006), 47, 74-76, 89, 100.

[6] Memoranda and Minutes of Petty France, 1.

[7] On Collins, See John Piggott, *Eleven Sermons Preach'd upon Special Occasions* (London: John Darby, 1714), 241-286; TNA PROB 11/467/82, Will of William Collins, Proved 13 November, 1702. Collins' birthyear, previously unknown to Baptist history, is derived from his marriage allegation, dated 10 April,

before the London elders put Nehemiah's gifts to work in the troubles with Thomas Collier. And it is likely that Coxe and Collins were the chief architects in the composition of the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith.

Coxe was well known for his theological learning and gifts. A lesser known fact, however, is that Coxe obtained the title Doctor of Medicine from the University of Utrecht on 5 August, 1684, writing his dissertation on arthritis.[8] Several Baptist historians assumed, wrongly, that Coxe was a Doctor of Divinity.[9] Though Coxe did not graduate as a Doctor of Divinity, he was not lacking in theological education. In a time when nonconformists were denied access to England's universities, it is likely that Nehemiah's father, an Oxford graduate, invested heavily in the education of his own son, Nehemiah.[10]

1684, which labels him "about 40." LPL VM I/13, Marriage Allegation of William Collins and Alice Thomas, 10 April, 1684. This was Collins' second marriage. William and Alice were married by license four days later at St. Nicholas Cole Abbey. LMA P69/NIC2/A/002/MS05686 St. Nicholas Cole Abbey Register of baptisms, marriages and burials, 1650/1-95. William Collins was buried on 7 November, 1702 in the Baptist Burial Ground in the Park, St. Saviour's, Southwark. P92/SAV/3004 St. Saviour's, Southwark Parish Register, 1673-1705.

[8] Nehemiah Cox, *Disputatio Medica Inauguralis, De Arthritide* (Utrecht: Typis Appelarianis, 1684). The dissertation is composed entirely in Latin. It is held in the British Library in a collection of medical theses from Utrecht. It was dedicated "Domino Henrico Kiffen, Mercatori Londinensi solertissimo æquissimoque, Amico suo plurimum colendo." "To Mr. Henry Kiffen, Merchant of London of greatest skill and fairness, his friend to be highly honored." Three years after obtaining his degree, Nehemiah was granted honorary membership in the Royal College of Physicians on 22 December, 1687. Coxe is listed among the honorary fellows of the Royal College of Physicians in Guy Miege, *The New State of England Under Their Majesties K. William and Q. Mary* (London: H.C., 1691), 231. Cf. also, William Munk, *The Roll of the Royal College of Physicians of London* (London: RCP, 1878) I:475-476. In addition to other references to Nehemiah as a Doctor in the wills of members of the Petty France church and the Calendar of State Papers, Coxe's marriage allegation, will, and gravestone specifically call him a Doctor of Physick.

[9] The confusion derived from an assumption on the part of Thomas Crosby. John Piggott referred to Nehemiah as "Dr. Nehem. Cox" in a footnote to a funeral sermon for Thomas Harrison (1667-14 August, 1702). Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 190. Crosby used Piggott's sermons as source material for his work, but assumed too much from this brief reference and styled Coxe D.D. Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists*, IV:265. Ivimey followed suit, appealing to Piggott's reference, but admitted that "We have not been able to ascertain from whence he obtained his Diploma." Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, II:403. Walter Wilson also labeled Coxe D.D. *The History and Antiquity of Dissenting Meeting Houses*, II:185. Whitley rightly identified Nehemiah as M.D. Whitley, "Benjamin Cox," 58.

[10] Cf. Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, II:403. Ivimey said, "This will account for his extraordinary learning notwithstanding the low station in Society he occupied at one period in his life." Another possibility lies in that in the mid-1660s, Hanserd Knollys published several books teaching Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. Perhaps Coxe learned these languages from Knollys' books, or even in Knollys' school in London. Cf. Hanserd Knollys, *Grammaticæ Latinæ Græcæ, & Hebraicæ* (London: Tho. Roycroft, 1665). Coxe himself said, "He that considers that the Holy Scriptures are originally written in Hebrew and Greek, must have a hard Forehead if he deny the usefulness of Learning to a Minister." Coxe, *A Sermon Preached At The Ordination Of An Elder and Deacons* (London: Tho. Fabian, 1681), 42.

Coxe's theological acuity, part nature and part nurture, contributed to the excellence of his work on covenant theology. In 1681, he published *A Discourse of the Covenants That God made with Men before the Law. Wherein, The Covenant of Circumcision is more largely handled, and the Invalidity of the Plea for Paedobaptism taken from thence discovered*.[11] In the preface to this work, Coxe stated plainly that the occasion for his book was Joseph Whiston's treatise in 1678, *Infant Baptism Plainly Proved*, the latest book in the series of volleys of the previous decade between Henry Danvers, Edward Hutchinson, Thomas Delaune, and Joseph Whiston.

Nehemiah's introductory comments demonstrate an awareness of some of the weaknesses in the current state of the debate. First, Coxe intentionally avoided a polemical style. The Baptists' literature on covenant theology up to this point had been almost exclusively polemical, and the latest pieces from Hutchinson and Delaune directed rather provocative statements at their opponents. Coxe was not avoiding the controversy, but the style of the controversy. Second, Coxe intended to prove the points he asserted so that he could be excused "from the Charge of crudely re-asserting those things that have been already answered or refuted"[12] Third, Coxe's primary focus was "the main hinge" of the controversy, the covenant of circumcision in Genesis 17.

A large and important part of the debate was omitted intentionally by Coxe. He acknowledged that while a treatment of the Mosaic covenant, distinguishing it from the new covenant, was important and necessary, he would be supposing this truth rather than arguing for it. He said,

> That Notion (which is often supposed in this Discourse) That the Old Covenant and the New do differ in substance, and not in the manner of their Administration only, doth indeed require a more large and particular handling to free it from those Prejudices and Difficulties that have been cast upon it by many worthy Persons, who are otherwise minded.[13]

In Coxe's opinion, writing on this subject was unnecessary and superfluous because

> I found my Labour for the clearing and asserting of that Point, happily prevented by the coming forth of Dr. Owen's 3[d] Vol. upon the Hebrews, where it is largely discoursed, and the Objections that seem to lie against it, fully answered…whither I now refer my Reader for Satisfaction about it, which he will there find answerable to what might be expected from so great and learned a Person.[14]

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[11] (London: J[ohn] D[arby], 1681).

[12] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, ii-iii. Delaune was guilty of this.

[13] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, iii-iv.

[14] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, iv-v. Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*. See chapter five.

In Owen, Coxe found the very arguments and principles that the Baptists themselves had argued. The old and new covenants were not two administrations of the same covenant. They differed in substance. Given the tensions in Owen's system, Nehemiah Coxe's choice makes sense. On the Mosaic covenant, Coxe referred the reader to Owen and left it at that. Then he took all of Owen's tools and applied them to the Abrahamic covenant.

Coxe's method was unique in Baptist covenant theology. He presented the subject systematically, not polemically.[15] The opening pages of Nehemiah's book were dedicated to principles of interpretation and "of Covenant-Relation to God in general" followed by an exposition of the covenant of works, the Noahic covenant, and the covenant of circumcision. His ruling hermeneutical principle was that "the best Interpreter of the Old Testament, is the holy Spirit speaking to us in the New."[16] The rest of the book sought to apply this principle to Genesis 1-17.

Of Covenant-Relation to God in General

Previous Baptist writers spent little time on the nature of how God covenants with mankind.[17] The context within which such discussions arose usually centered around whether a covenant had to be mutual in order for it to be an actual covenant. And this was usually discussed in the context of the conditionality of the covenant of grace. Some Baptists urged the necessity of man's covenanting in the covenant of grace so as to exclude children who made no profession of faith. Others urged the absoluteness of God's operations in the covenant, excluding children whose lack of profession indicated that no work of grace had been performed in their life at that time.[18]

Nehemiah adopted the standard Reformed language of the day, reducing covenants to stipulation and restipulation. God proposes and man responds. Covenants derive exclusively from God choosing to deal with men in such a mode. This is so because "None

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[15] Joseph Whiston considered this a weakness. "He declines the handling of things in a polemical way, but that quite spoils his design, and renders his whole Discourse utterly useless." Whiston, *Energeia Planes, Or a brief discourse concerning Man's natural proneness to, and tenaciousness of errour. Whereunto is added Some Arguments to prove, that the Covenant entred with Abraham, Gen. 17.7. is the Covenant of Grace* (London: J[ohn] D[arby], 1682), 106-107. This was the same publisher as Coxe's book.

[16] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 3. Here he followed in the footsteps of his father and Kiffen and Knollys who had asserted the same in Coxe, Kiffin, Knollys, *A Declaration*, 14.

[17] For Particular Baptist definitions of covenant, see Spilsbury, *A Treatise Concerning the Lawfull Subject of Baptisme*, 8. Blackwood, *Expositions and Sermons*, 2. King, *A Way to Sion Sought Out*, 3. Richardson, *Divine Consolations*, 221-222. Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, 30-31. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 40. Delaune, *Truth Defended*, 9.

[18] Even those who urged the absolute nature of the covenant of grace did not deny that faith was a condition of it in some sense.

can oblige God, or make him their Debtor, unless he condescend to oblige himself by Covenant or Promise."[19]

Depending on God's stipulation, man must restipulate accordingly. "If the Covenant be of Works, the Restipulation must be, by doing the things required in it." In a covenant of works, "the reward is of Debt (understand it not of Debt absolutely, but of Debt by compact)."[20] Coxe's distinction of absolute debt and debt by compact is another reference back to his previous statement that covenants result only from God's condescension. Man's obedience to God is not inherently meritorious, i.e., absolute debt. Rather, man's obedience becomes meritorious because of the terms of the covenant, i.e., debt by compact. Opposite to a covenant of works is "a Covenant of free and soveraign Grace." The "Restipulation required, is an humble receiving, or hearty believing of those gratuitous Promises on which the Covenant is established."[21] This is an articulation of the mechanics behind the dogmatic distinction between the law and the gospel.[22] It is likewise an articulation of the distinction between matter and form. A covenant materially based on promises requires a formal restipulation of faith. A covenant materially based on commands requires a formal restipulation of obedience.

Like Owen had taught, the difference between the two kinds of covenants meant that covenants must be compared by their promises. And thus, "if one covenant be established upon better promises…then another, it is from thence denominated, and for that reason to be esteemed a better covenant then the other."[23] In other words, the old and new covenants cannot be the same if one has better promises than the other.

Coxe also taught that all covenants are transacted through federal heads ("publick Person, Head, or Representative"), and the only way to belong to a given covenant was to belong to the federal head of that covenant.[24] Thus it was, Coxe argued, for Adam, Noah, and Abraham. And so it is with Christ. "It is by Union to him that Believers obtain a new-Covenant-interest."[25] Here again his Baptist views surface. The clear implication is

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[19] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 6. "Such a priviledg, and nearness to God, as is included in Covenant-Interest, cannot immediately result from the relation which they have to God as Creatures…for the Lord owes not unto Man the Good promised in any Covenant he makes with them, antecedently." Cf. 2LCF 7.1.

[20] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 9.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Another contrast used by Coxe was to describe a covenant of works as accepting the works, then the person. A covenant of grace accepts the person, then the works. Cf. Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 47-48. This was a common distinction in covenant theology. Cf. also Bolton, *The True Bounds*, 263; Bulkley, *The Gospel Covenant Opened*, 77.

[23] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 9-10.

[24] This is why early Particular Baptists who called Adam a "publick head" were supposing the doctrine of the covenant of works, even if just in its basic doctrinal tenets.

[25] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 12.

that believers' children can only lay claim to the covenant of grace through Christ, not their parents.

Coxe argued that because covenants are instituted by God and do not arise from any natural state, "our Knowledge and Understanding of them, must wholly depend upon Divine Revelation…seeing the nature of them is such as transcends common Principles of Reason or natural Light."[26] The details and demands of covenants depended purely on God's positive laws. The implication is that in a covenantal context, consequences cannot be used to institute or govern the practice of baptism. The danger was great for Coxe. He said, "some one error admitted about the nature of God's fœderal transactions with men, doth strangely perplex the whole Systeme, or Body of Divinity, and intangle our interpretation of innumerable Texts of Scripture."[27]

Though not polemical in style, Coxe's work was self-consciously Baptist. By the conclusion of his comments on covenants in general he had already asserted the difference in substance between the old and new covenants, the necessity of union with Christ for membership in the covenant of grace, the exclusivity of revelation for governing covenantal ordinances, and more.

The Covenant of Works

The covenant of works was a central and important doctrine for Nehemiah Coxe. To misunderstand it was to destroy the foundation of everything that followed because "the right understanding of these things, is not only necessary in order to, but lies in the very Foundation of all useful Knowledg of our selves, and of the mind of God in all Revelations, that he hath in following Ages made."[28]

Adam was created in the image of God, upright and holy, knowing the universal law of nature as a correspondent to his innocent integrity. The covenant of works, therefore, was not Adam's natural state. As Coxe had laid out previously, covenants do not arise from man's natural relation to God, nor is man's obedience inherently meritorious.

The covenant of works was introduced by God in a positive command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.[29] Added to the positive command was the threat of death for disobedience and the promise of eternal life. This threat already existed

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[26] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 13.

[27] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 14.

[28] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 17. Coxe had already spoken of the covenant of works in his confutation of Thomas Collier. Cf. Coxe, *Vindiciae Veritatis*, 64, 72-73, 78-79.

[29] "It pleased the sovereign Majesty of Heaven to add to this eternal law a positive precept… The eating of this fruit was not a thing evil in itself but was made so by divine prohibition." Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 19.

relative to the law of nature, but was explicitly connected to the positive command.[30] The promise of eternal life was suspended "on condition of his perfect Obedience to these Laws, which Condition if he had fulfilled, the Reward had been due to him, by vertue of this Compact."[31] Again, the covenant of works was not a natural occurrence. The penalty of death for sin was naturally known and naturally owed, but the reward promised to Adam could only be obtained by covenant.

Nehemiah argued for the eternal reward of life from the inverse of the threat of death, from the "State of tryal" Adam was in, from the "sacramental" tree of life in the garden of Eden, and from the Mosaic covenant which "in some way included the covenant of creation and served for a memorial of it." Because the Mosaic covenant repeated the same moral precept as the covenant of works, it also repeated the same reward "that by compact had been due to Adam."[32] This eternal life was not simply a continuance in Adam's state, but "a greater Degree of Happiness then he immediately enjoyed."[33]

Adam did not receive these laws and promises for himself alone, but rather as a federal head. Mankind was in Adam "as a natural, and Fœderal root; and therefore in his standing all Mankind stood, and in his Fall, they all sinned and fell in him."[34]

Coxe concluded, "It is evident that God dealt with Adam not only upon Terms of a Law, but in a way of Covenant, and that this Transaction with him was of a Fœderal Nature."[35] This distinction is important. A law is merely a command. A law with a promise of reward which would otherwise be unavailable is a covenant.[36] Thus the positive law, condition of obedience, threat of death, and positive reward given to Adam as a federal head constitute a complete covenant of works. Coxe added, "altho it be not in Scripture expressly called a Covenant, yet it hath the express Nature of a Covenant, and there is no reason for Nicety about Terms where the thing it self, is sufficiently revealed to us."[37]

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[30] "This Law was guarded by a Sanction, in the threatning of Death to the Transgression thereof." Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 20.

[31] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 21.

[32] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 21-24.

[33] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 25.

[34] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 26.

[35] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 27.

[36] This is why 2LCF 6.1 teaches the covenant of works. It does not merely speak of commands given to Adam, but a positive command, a condition of obedience, a threat of death, and a promise of eternal reward. The term "covenant" was not removed in favor of "law." Coxe also pointed out that had Adam been only under a law, and not a covenant, "his Sin had remained upon himself, and could not have redounded upon the whole World of Mankind, as now it doth by a just imputation." Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 28.

[37] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 27.

Adam broke the covenant of works by failing to obey God's positive command regarding the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil. Through his transgression, Adam and his posterity were plunged into sin and the curse of death. This state of affairs was so final that "In this Condition Man was…utterly disabled to stand before God upon Terms of a Covenant of Works, and as uncapable to bring himself upon other Terms with God; for he was not able to move one step towards a Reconciliation with God."[38]

Coxe's treatment of the covenant of works sets down in detail that which had been supposed by others. Particular Baptists before or after Coxe did not write against the concept or doctrinal building blocks of the covenant of works. Nor did the Particular Baptists' critics engage them on this point. That is because there was no difference between the camps here. And his comments on covenant-relation in general, combined with his comments on the covenant of works in particular, inform the Baptists' edits in their Confession of Faith. When 2LCF 6.1 and 7.1 are read in light of Coxe's work, the confession asserts the doctrine of the covenant of works clearly. Given the likelihood of Coxe's involvement in the confession's composition, the confession resembles his covenantal thought strongly. This will continue to be the case.

The Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Grace

Though man fell into sin, God planned before the creation of the world to save a "remnant" of fallen mankind and to bring them to "a Kingdom and Glory far greater than that set before Adam in his Integrity." This plan was "transacted in a way of Covenant between the Father and the Son, even in a Covenant of Redemption." This covenant of redemption included "the Promises of the Father to the Mediator, and the restipulatory Engagements of the Redeemer, about the Salvation of Sinners."[39]

At the time of Coxe's publication, the covenant of redemption had reached a position of robust expression and articulation in Reformed theology, particularly in the recent decades through men like John Owen.[40] It also had been hinted at in the Baptists' own

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[38] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 35. These comments are important in comparison with his previous statement that the Mosaic covenant repeated the promise of eternal life. Coxe was not teaching that the Mosaic covenant was the covenant of works remade, but rather that the covenant of works was repeated at Sinai. See below on Coxe's limitation of the old covenant to an earthly sphere.

[39] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 36-37.

[40] David Dickson, *Therapeutica Sacra* (Edinburgh: Evan Tyler, 1664), 22-71. Bulkley, *The Gospel Covenant Opened*, 31-45. John Owen, *Exercitations on the Epistle to the Hebrews Concerning the Priesthood of Christ…With a Continuation of the Exposition on the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Chapters* (London: John Darby, 1674), 49-62. Patrick Gillespie, *The Ark of the Covenant Opened: Or, A Treatise of the Covenant of Redemption* (London: Tho. Parkhurst, 1677). Owen prefaced this work by Gillespie. For more on the origins and development of the covenant of redemption, see Muller, "Toward the Pactum Salutis: Locating the Origins of a Concept." *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 18 (2007): 11-65; J. V. Fesko, *The Covenant of Redemption: Origins, Development, and*

writings, especially in 1LCF XII. More recently, they confessed the doctrine of the covenant of redemption clearly in 2LCF 7.3 and 8.1.[41] Nehemiah himself mentioned the covenant of redemption several times in his confutation of Thomas Collier.[42]

In the covenant of redemption it was not just the salvation of sinners that was entrusted to God the Son, but "the Government of the whole World was actually put into the hands of the Son of God…And by him were all future Transactions managed for the Good of Man, and all Discoveries of Grace and Mercy were made to the Children of Men in him, and by him."[43] This meant that all of the events in history from this point forward "were brought into an order subservient to the Ends of the new Creation, and the Redemption of lost Man."[44] The subservient nature of redemptive history will continue to be an important theme in Coxe's thought.

God's eternal plan to save sinners was made known in the curse pronounced on Satan in Genesis 3:15. And "In the Sentence passed upon the Serpent…there was couched a blessed Promise of Redemption…which Salvation thus promised, Man was to receive by Faith."[45] This is the covenant of grace.[46] According to Coxe's definitions, a stipulated promise responded to by a restipulation of faith forms a complete covenant of grace.

Coxe immediately applied this to the church. He said, "In this implyed Promise was laid the first Foundation of the Church after the Fall, which was to be raised up out of the

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Reception (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016); Trueman, *John Owen*, 76-99; Mark Jones, *Why Heaven Kissed Earth: The Christology of the Puritan Reformed Orthodox theologian, Thomas Goodwin (1600–1680)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010), 123-145; Willem J. van Asselt, "Covenant Theology as Relational Theology: The Contributions of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) and John Owen (1618-1683) to a Living Reformed Theology," *The Ashgate Research Companion to John Owen's Theology*, 73-82.

[41] 1LCF XII followed William Ames' *Marrow*. 2LCF 8.1 followed the *Savoy Declaration*, but 2LCF 7.3 was unique. Christopher Blackwood also spoke of "that which was Covenanted before the world was, and agreed betwixt the trinity." Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 65.

[42] Coxe, *Vindiciae Veritatis*, 14, 16, 23.

[43] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 37. Coxe elsewhere distinguished the dual kingship of Christ. Cf. Coxe, *Vindiciae Veritatis*, 13-14. "The Son is the Lord of the whole Creation, and Heir of all things; and this right of principality in him hath a double foundation; 1. It is in him as he is the Son begotten of the substance of the Father, having the same Essence with him, and the Creator of all things. 2. It is founded in the Covenant of Redemption made between the Father and him, and is referred to his Mediatory kingdom; the first belongs to him by necessity of nature from Everlasting, unto his Mediatory kingdom and principality he was designed of God according to Covenant, and foreordained from Everlasting." Cf. also Benjamin Keach, *The Display of Glorious Grace Or, The Covenant of Peace Opened* (London: S. Bridge, 1698), 69.

[44] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 37-38.

[45] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 38.

[46] Elsewhere, Coxe described Genesis 3:15 as "a Revelation of the Sum of the Covenant of Redemption." Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 58. It is a matter of perspective. That the Son of God must come and destroy the devil is a condition laid on the Son in the covenant of redemption. That the Son of God will accomplish this is the promise of salvation in the covenant of grace.

Ruines of the Devil's Kingdom." What Christ undertook and accomplished according to the covenant of redemption he did "not for himself only, but for his Body the Church, of which every true Believer is a Member."[47] From the beginning, the covenants of works and grace involved two contradistinguished groups of people, fallen man and redeemed man. The strength of this argument rested on Coxe's supporting assertions. None could escape the curse of the covenant of works unless God placed them in a new covenant, and none could claim a place in the mediatorial work of Christ except those who had been promised to the Son in the covenant of redemption and who had believed in the promise of salvation in the covenant of grace.

Bolstering his argument, Coxe argued that the only way to enter into the covenant of grace is to believe in its promises. It was so for Adam, and it is so for all mankind. Where the gospel is made known, there the covenant of grace is materially declared. Coxe said, "Altho' the Covenant of Grace was thus far revealed unto Adam…there was no formal and express Covenant-Transaction with him, much less was the Covenant of Grace established with him as a Publick Person." Because all covenants are transacted through federal heads, the only way to belong to Christ's covenant, is to belong to Christ. "As [Adam] obtained Interest for himself alone…by his own Faith, so must those of his Posterity that are saved."[48] The implied assertion is that membership in the covenant of grace does not pass through parental lineage. Adam believed the promise, but this in no way entitled his offspring to the promises thereof. Coxe reused this argument in his treatment of the Abrahamic covenant.

Coxe concluded that all mankind now lies "under a broken covenant," liable to its curse and obligated to its law.[49] Despite this cursed state, the world was under "a general Reprieve" until Christ gathered all of the elect into "his Mediatorial Kingdom." When the elect were saved, Christ would return and

> raise all Mankind again in an incorruptible State, prepared for that eternal Duration unto which they were designed in their first Creation; And then will he glorifie all those with himself for whom he hath satisfyed the Justice of God…and others he will deliver up by a righteous Sentence, unto the full Execution of that Curse upon them in its utmost Rigor, which till then, for the Ends aforesaid, was suspended.[50]

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[47] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 39.

[48] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 43.

[49] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 44. "The Law of Creation binds when the Covenant of Creation is broken."

[50] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 44-45.

The usefulness of avoiding a polemical style is evident in Nehemiah's writing. He did not avoid the debate of his day. Rather, he built his case positively. And he did so in a way that is nearly indistinguishable from the covenant theology of paedobaptists.[51] Coxe constructed his arguments with the common building blocks of Reformed federalism, yet all the while the doctrines he explained and the arguments he raised contributed to his Baptist ecclesiology and undermined that of the paedobaptists. This was the Baptists' constant argument, after all. The Particular Baptists were born from English parish Puritanism, the same as the Presbyterians and Independents. They believed that Reformed theology did not have to be abandoned, but refined and made self-consistent. Coxe's writings demonstrate a systematization of covenant theology in a way that no other Particular Baptist had attempted.

The Noahic Covenant

As Nehemiah proceeded to the Noahic covenant, he surveyed the history between Adam and Noah, pointing out that God positively instituted a system of worship as evidenced by approval and disapproval of the sacrifices offered by Cain and Abel. He also noted that although the godly organized themselves into a distinct group, known as the Sons of God, the revelation of the covenant of grace was not exclusively delivered to them, nor were there any distinguishing factors between the godly and the ungodly at that time other than belief or unbelief.[52]

Coxe then focused on the typology of the events surrounding the construction of the ark and the flood. The ark was a symbol of salvation from destruction, deliverance from judgment. Thus, "the Gospel was preached unto them by Types and dark Shadows." Coxe acknowledged, however, that the typical nature of Old Testament ordinances and providences was not their first and primary significance. He added, "we read of no special Ordination, or Appointment of these things unto such an End…but what they had from the Order and Voice of Providence." In other words, the ark was first and foremost a large boat rescuing Noah and his family from a flood. For the Old Testament believers, "We have no reason to think that these things could be then apprehended so distinctly and clearly, as we now see them by the Light of the New Testament; yet we have good ground to believe that some general Knowledg of them was conveyed to the Minds of the Faithful."[53] Their knowledge was sufficient for salvation, but not exhaustive.

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[51] It is worth noting that the Confession of Faith reflected the same method.

[52] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 47-51. Coxe revisited this point later when saying that the covenant of circumcision was the first institution of a visible church, an exclusive society of worshippers.

[53] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 53-56.

As to the Noahic covenant itself, Coxe saw only one covenant made with Noah, though the appearance was that there are two, given the reference before and after the flood event. Working with his previous definitions, Coxe described the Noahic covenant as promising "the Preservation of Noah, and all that were with him in the Ark" while the "Restipulation required of him, was, a believing Resignation of himself to God, in an obedient use of those Means of safety which he had ordained."[54]

This seemed to be merely a promise of "Temporal" blessings, but Coxe explained that the Noahic covenant was connected to eternal blessings as well. The Noahic covenant preserved the line of Eve and thereby secured eternal salvific blessings by securing the birth of the promised Seed. As Coxe had stated previously, all of redemptive history played a subservient role in the crescendo of salvation.

Coxe was careful to distinguish, however, that simply because gospel promises were made known in and through Noah's covenant and the history surrounding it, Noah's covenant was not the covenant of grace itself. This was important because the same hermeneutic would be put into practice when dealing with the Abrahamic covenant. Coxe said, "under this Covenant was implyed, and darkly shadowed, the Covenant of eternal Salvation by Christ; even as the Promise of the heavenly Inheritance unto Believers, was afterwards couched in the Promise of Canaan to Abraham and his Seed."[55]

Setting the stage for interpreting the covenant of circumcision was of highest importance for Nehemiah. His comments on covenant-relation in general and everything that followed set down a system of covenant theology within which later covenants would receive consistent treatment. Coxe did this in the Noahic covenant, not just through careful typology, but also through discussing federal headship.

Nehemiah noted that the covenant was made with Noah, his sons, their seed, and their perpetual generations. The concept of federal headship meant that so long as the covenant remained active, all later generations had a direct claim to the terms thereof. Covenant interest was not mediated through parents, but through federal headship. He said, "remote Generations…are as much concerned in this Covenant…without any consideration had of their immediate parents."[56] The application of this to errors in his day was that "Altho' the Grace of the New-Covenant was mystically held forth in this Covenant with Noah, which was thus stricken with him for all his Posterity, yet were not the Grace and Blessings thereof by this means intailed upon all Mankind." Rather, "those

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[54] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 57.

[55] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 58. He added, later, "This Covenant had also its Mystical Use to the Faithful, as shadowing the Covenant of Grace by Christ…so that in the typical respect of this Covenant, the Light of divine Grace, and Mercy, did dawn upon the Church with some more Clearness then formerly." Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 60-61.

[56] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 61.

Blessings…remain the peculiar Right of those that do by Faith receive them."[57] Coxe employed the same principles throughout his book.

The Covenant of Grace Revealed to Abraham

In the progress of Redemptive History, the next "signal Advance" was found in Genesis 12 when God revealed the covenant of grace to Abraham, surpassing previous and subsequent covenantal dealings with mankind in clarity. This covenant of grace "was the same for substance, that had been more darkly revealed in the ages before, but it pleased God to transact it with him as he had not done with any before him."[58]

Coxe was setting out to articulate and defend the primary argument of the Particular Baptists from Ritor onward, namely that Abraham had a twofold seed and that these seeds belonged to two distinct covenants. He argued,

> *Abraham* is to be considered in a double Capacity, both as the *Father* of all true *Believers*, and as the *Father* and Root of the *Israelitish Nation*, and for both these *Seeds* God did enter into Covenant with him; howbeit these *Seeds* being formally distinguisht the one from the other, their Covenant Interest must of necessity be *diverse*, and fall under a distinct Consideration; and the Blessings appropriate to either, must be conveyed in a way agreeable to their peculiar and respective Covenant-Interest.[59]

To err on this point was dangerous. Coxe added, "These things may not be confounded without a manifest Hazard of the most important Articles in the Christian Religion."[60]

Coxe's method for the remainder of the book was to distinguish and relate these two seeds and their respective covenants. He dedicated a section to the covenant of grace as revealed to Abraham, another to the covenant of circumcision given to Abraham, and a final section to the relationship between the two.[61]

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[57] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 62-63.

[58] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 69. The modern reprint of this work mistakenly rewords this section and contradicts its sense. Cf. Coxe, *Covenant Theology*, 71.

[59] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 71-72.

[60] Ibid.

[61] In total, Coxe dedicated four chapters to the subject. Oddly, Whiston criticized Coxe for not dedicating enough of an argument to this point. "In case he expected that his Discourse should be of any use for the clearing up that great Point, concerning the right Subjects of Baptism…he should have applyed himself with the utmost diligence, to have proved this his Supposition. Of all that he affirms in his whole Discourse, this required the clearest and most convincing proof." Whiston, *Energeia Planes*, 106.

At the outset of his book, Coxe had set down the hermeneutical priority of the New Testament over the Old, so in order to interpret Genesis 12, he turned to Galatians 3:6-9, 16-17 from which he argued that in Genesis 12 "the Gospel was preached to *Abraham*, and the Covenant of Grace revealed to him."[62] In the promise that in Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed, "The *Sum* and Substance of all spiritual and eternal Blessings was *included*" and "The Grace and Blessings of the New-Covenant were given and ensured unto *Abraham* for *himself*."[63]

Though Abraham obtained salvation for himself alone, it was his great privilege to become the father of all who believe, a promise that extended not to any particular nation, but to the world. Despite his special place as a "father," Coxe qualified that "It is not *Abraham* but *Christ* that is *the first Head* thereof; in and by him all the Promises of it are ratified, as he was the *Surety of the Covenant*."[64] Thus, all who believe are Abraham's children because they emulate his faith and embrace his Savior.[65]

The promise was of justification by faith, as argued by Paul in Galatians 3. Thus, Coxe restricted these promises exclusively to Abraham's spiritual seed, i.e., believers. He asserted this based on Paul's statement that the promises were made to Abraham's seed, meaning Christ. Thus whether Christ was considered personally, or mystically, i.e., those united to Christ by the Spirit, the result was the same. Nehemiah connected this to the covenant of redemption. Whether one speaks of the Mediator, or those for whom he is appointed Mediator, the only persons in view of the promises of the covenant of grace are the elect.[66]

Coxe strengthened his argument with a definition of the covenant of grace. It is "a Covenant that conveys the Grace of Life to poor Sinners by a free and gracious Promise,

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[62] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 73-74. Joseph Whiston disagreed with Coxe, arguing that the 430 years between God's covenantal dealings with Abraham and the Israelites' exodus from Egypt referred to Genesis 17, not Genesis 12. Cf. Whiston, *Energeia Planes*, 97-101. However, Owen calculated the 430 years from Genesis 12, as Coxe did. Cf. Owen, *Exercitations*, 261. Whiston also argued that Genesis 12 did not contain the covenant of grace because there was no stipulation and restipulation. "Where we have neither the Name of a Covenant, nor the thing it self, there no Covenant." Whiston, *Energeia Planes*, 95-96. Owen stated that the promise of the covenant of grace given to Adam "included in it the nature of a *Covenant*, vertually requiring a re-stipulation unto *obedience* in them who by faith come to have an interest therein." Owen, *Exercitations*, 54. The same argument could be made about the gospel promise in Genesis 12. Whiston was being quite selective.

[63] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 75-76.

[64] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 77.

[65] Later, Coxe argued that though believers are Abraham's children they are not also fathers. No one else can claim to exercise an office like Abraham. He said, "They are not each one by this Covenant made the Father of a blessed Seed, as Abraham was the Father of the Faithful…but they must rest in a Relation to him as Children, and so receive the Blessing…by their own Faith, and for themselves alone." Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 88.

[66] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 77-81.

which admits of no other *Restipulation* in order to Covenant-Interest but *Believing*." There is no other covenant of grace. He added, "There is but *one Covenant* of spiritual and eternal Blessings in Christ Jesus founded in the eternal Decree and Counsel of God's Love and Grace…and there is but *one Seed*, which is of true Believers in Union with Christ, promised to him as the Heirs of this Covenant."[67]

Because the covenant of grace could only be received by faith, its promises were not obtained "by a *natural Descent* from *Abraham*, or any *external Priviledg* appendent thereunto, but *by a walking in the Footsteps of Abraham's Faith*." This state of affairs, thus set, could not be "*altered*, nor any ways *evacuated*, or superseded by any future Dispensation."[68] No subsequent covenantal transaction could alter this unavoidable reality that the covenant of grace belonged only to those who believed in the gospel, as Abraham did. Rather, "whatsoever *Law* or *Covenant* was afterwards given unto them, must of necessity lye in an order of *Subserviency* unto it."[69]

Echoing Owen's covenant theology, and resolving one of the major tensions in it, Coxe remarked that the covenant of grace as revealed to Abraham "was not filled up with Ordinances of Worship *proper*, *and peculiar to it self*, until the times of Reformation."[70] Because the covenant of grace was a testament, in Coxe's thought, it was only a promise in the Old Testament. Consequently, the ordinances of the covenant of circumcision and the Mosaic covenant did not belong to the covenant of grace. The covenant of circumcision was not an administration of the covenant of grace. Owen called circumcision the outward seal of the covenant of grace; Coxe did not.

Like many other Particular Baptists, and following in the vein of John Cameron and John Owen, Coxe asserted that the ordinances of the Israelite covenants were primarily earthly and temporal in meaning, but secondarily and typologically spiritual in their meaning. The ordinances of the new covenant were "proper" and "peculiar" because they did not point to anything beyond or other than themselves. They represented spiritual realities and nothing else. Coxe took Owen's typological hermeneutic and applied it to circumcision in the Abrahamic covenant.

Coxe argued further that the blessings of the covenant of grace were obtained in full, or not at all. This was so because "all the Blessings of this Covenant redound upon Believers by means of their *Union and Communion with the Lord Jesus Christ*, who is both

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[67] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 82.

[68] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 83.

[69] Ibid. Elsewhere, Coxe said "all the dealings of God with [Israel] as a select and peculiar People in Covenant with himself, were in Subserviency to the great Ends of this Covenant with Abraham; and therefore none of them may be interpreted to the Prejudice or disannulling of those Promises in which the Gospel was preached unto Abraham." Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 75.

[70] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 84.

the *Head*, and *Root* of the New-Covenant."[71] The polemical purpose of this argument was to undermine paedobaptist efforts to relate their children to some, but not all, of the blessings of the covenant of grace.[72] Rather, "It is by Union to [Christ] as the Root of the New-Covenant, that *the free Gift comes upon them to the Justification of Life*; and none can have Union to him but by the *indwelling of his holy Spirit*."[73]

Coxe's treatment of the covenant of grace revealed to Abraham was a fairly simple argument. The dogmatic difference between the law and the gospel, developed into the doctrines of the covenants of works and grace and combined with their respective restipulations and federal heads, meant that all mankind was either dead in Adam or alive in Christ. And in Genesis 12 God made Abraham a paradigm of belief, an example of justification by faith, so that the whole world would see and understand that it is only by believing in the Gospel that one obtains the blessings of eternal life promised freely to sinners in the covenant of grace. This was the same covenant of grace materially revealed in Genesis 3, but it served as a monumental "farther step" in the progress of the "full discovery" of the covenant of grace which was formally completed in the death of Christ.

The Covenant of Circumcision

Nehemiah dedicated the majority of his book to explaining God's covenantal dealings with Abraham relative to his natural offspring. Coxe's intent was to show that the covenant sealed in Genesis 17 was a solemnization of covenantal dealings that had been developing for many years, as well as a foundation for the Mosaic covenant in years to follow.

Beginning in Genesis 12, Coxe pointed out that alongside of the heavenly promises of the covenant of grace God gave an earthly promise to Abraham, the multiplication of his offspring. In Genesis 13:14-17 God added the promise of a fruitful land in which the multiplied offspring would dwell.[74] Expanding on this promise in Genesis 12 and 13,

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[71] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 85.

[72] For a discussion of varying views among paedobaptists on this point, as well as the position that Coxe himself has in view, see Whiston, *An Essay to Revive the Primitive Doctrine*, 86-196, especially 100-103. Cf. also Whiston, *Energeia Planes*, 148-149. Whiston responds to Coxe here, but simply refers the reader to the previous works which Coxe had critiqued.

[73] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 87. Whiston disagreed. He said, "There is a Political, as well as a Physical Union with Christ. The former is made by the Covenant: The latter by the indwelling of the Spirit." Whiston, *Energeia Planes*, 152. This is similar to Owen's external breakable administration of the covenant.

[74] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 91-95. Coxe paused for a moment to explain the meaning of Canaan as an everlasting possession by referencing several other Old Testament structures that were said to be everlasting, like the priesthood of Levi and the gates of the temple. These, he argued, were everlasting in the sense that they would not cease until the time of the Messiah. They would not expire until their purpose

Coxe drew attention to God's oath to Abraham in Genesis 15 that his descendants would surely inherit the land of Canaan. He pointed out that "these things are expressly said to have been transacted in a way of *Covenant* with *Abraham*."[75] Coxe was building a case that God's covenantal dealings with Abraham were progressive, and one must take them all into account to get a complete picture of the covenant in view.

At last Coxe arrived at Genesis 17, the "hinge of the controversy."[76] Referencing Acts 7:8, he consistently referred to this covenant as the covenant of circumcision, explaining this name to mean "that Covenant of which Circumcision was *the Sign* or *Token*; or that Covenant in which a *Restipulation* was required by the Observation of *this Rite*."[77] Here Coxe noted that whereas God had primarily covenanted promises to Abraham thus far, here "we first meet with an *express* Injunction of *Obedience to a Command* (and that of *positive* Right) as the *Condition* of Covenant Interest." Though God vouchsafed "for the *Ensurance* of the Promises…a *strict and intire Obedience* to his Precepts is required in order to the Inheritance of the good things that were to be given by this Covenant."[78]

Because the covenant of circumcision was a covenant of works, it was not the covenant of grace. This is Coxe's entire argument, and again he is operating within his definitions. A covenant that requires a restipulation of obedience in order to obtain its promised blessing is a formal covenant of works. Coxe was not arguing that the presence of obedience in the covenant of circumcision made it a covenant of works. Rather, he was emphasizing that God told Abraham that failure to comply with the command of circumcision resulted in disinheritance. A covenant that disinherits its members for disobedience is a formal covenant of works.[79]

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was fulfilled. The fact that the Jews were not living in their own land at the time of Coxe's publication was sufficient proof that "everlasting" was not to be taken absolutely. Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 97-98.

[75] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 101.

[76] Whiston acknowledged that if Coxe could prove his case, all paedobaptists would have to admit their error, and vice versa. "Could they prove that that Covenant was the old Covenant, it must be granted, that the ground we lay to Infants Covenant-Interest and Baptism therein must needs fall, and consequently the Claim we bottom thereupon must be acknowledged to be vain: So, on the other hand, were they fully convinced that that Covenant is indeed the Covenant of Grace, they must acknowledge our Claim to be just." Interestingly, Whiston acknowledged that it was possible to consider the Abrahamic covenant to be the covenant of grace and yet maintain a credobaptist view. "It is possible indeed that some may grant this Covenant to be the Covenant of Grace, and yet deny the Covenant-Interest and Baptism of the Infant-Seed of Believers, and that upon this Supposition, viz. That Infants are not Abraham's Seed." Whiston, *Energeia Planes*, x. This was John Spilsbury's argument.

[77] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 104.

[78] Ibid. The emphasis on circumcision as a "positive right" is a polemical reminder that all ordinances must be understood and obeyed according to their positive institution.

[79] Whiston criticized Coxe's use of Romans 3:1-2; Galatians 5:3; and Philippians 3 to prove that circumcision was a part of a covenant of works. But Whiston conveniently avoided Coxe's comments

Based on this foundation, Coxe immediately made the connection to the Mosaic covenant. He said, "In *this Mode* of transacting [the covenant], the Lord was pleased to draw the first Lines of that Form of Covenant-Relation, which the natural Seed of *Abraham*, were fully stated in by the *Law of Moses*, which was a *Covenant of Works*, and its Condition or Terms, *Do this and live*."[80] There was already a strong branch of Reformed covenant theology (from Olevianus to Cameron to Bolton to Owen, and many more) that argued that the old covenant could not be the covenant of grace because it promised an earthly inheritance and disinherited those who did not comply with its commands. Coxe was applying their tools and hermeneutics to argue from the Scriptures that this kind of arrangement was already present with the same parties (Abraham and his descendants) and the same commands (ceremonial obedience) four hundred years before the law was given by Moses.

Because of the Particular Baptists' insistence on the earthly character of God's covenants with Israel, as well as their description of those covenants in terms of works and obedience, in their early years they were falsely accused of divesting the old testament of the promises of the gospel.[81] Coxe had already avoided this claim by identifying the covenant of grace as it was materially revealed to Adam, Noah, and Abraham, repeatedly presenting the typological character of Old Testament covenantal transactions, but he did the same in Genesis 17.

Coxe viewed Genesis 17:4-5 as a repetition of Genesis 12:3. God's promise that Abraham would be a father of many nations was interpreted by Paul in Romans 4 to refer to Abraham's identity as a father of all who believe. God was rehearsing the covenant of grace in the context of making the covenant of circumcision.[82] This was done to confirm the reality that "The Springs of New-Covenant-Mercy, which God had before opened to all Nations were not to be shut up again by this Covenant [of circumcision]."[83] The "covenant of peculiarity," as Coxe sometimes called the covenant of circumcision,

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drawn from Genesis 17 itself, the most important part of the whole argument. Cf. Whiston, *Energeia Planes,* 114-117.

[80] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 104. He added, "This Chapter leads us on a great Step towards the *Sinai Covenant*, and the Terms thereof." Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 105.

[81] Their opponents incorrectly, but intentionally, associated them with an Anabaptist hyper-dichotomy between the law and the gospel.

[82] Cf. also King, *A Way to Sion Sought Out*, 16. "There is difference between a promise and a Covenant: God promised, Jer. 31. 33. I will make a new Covenant. Now here he promiseth to make the Covenant, but it was not a Covenant in force till the death of Christ, and so confirmed by his blood." And Blackwood argued that in Genesis 17 "the new Covenant is promised but not covenanted, which promise before was made to *Adam*, *Noah*, *Abraham*."[82] Citing Jeremiah 31 he continued, "Hee saith not, I have made a covenant, but I will make a new Covenant which was made good at the death of Christ, as the Apostle makes it appeare, Heb. 8.9. 10 repeating this place of *Ieremie*." Blackwood, *The Storming of Antichrist*, 35.

[83] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 106. A marginal note says "Read diligently *Gal*. 3."

"should not *evacuate*, or *intrench upon* the Covenant of Grace, or the *Right* and Priviledg of the Spiritual Seed stated therein."[84]

The design of the rehearsal of the transnational covenant of grace as a preface to the national covenant of circumcision was to make the covenant of circumcision "*subservient* to the great Ends thereof…designed of God only as *an Handmaid thereto*."[85] The covenant of grace was thus made known in the covenant of circumcision, but it was not yet established. In perhaps the single most pertinent explanation of 2LCF 7.3, Coxe stated that "The *full Revelation* of the Covenant of Grace, the *actual* Accomplishment of the great Promises thereof, and its being *filled up* with Ordinances proper thereunto, should *succeed* the Covenant made with *Israel after the Flesh*."[86] Again, the tools and tensions of Owen were addressed. The covenant of grace was not the covenant of circumcision. It was the promise of a testament that had not yet been established.

The relationship between the covenant of circumcision and the covenant of grace imbued the covenant of circumcision with a subservient and typological character. Coxe said that just as the covenant of circumcision "should be *subordinate* to the great Promise; so also spiritual Blessings should be mystically implyed in them."[87] The typological connection between the covenants meant that "a confirmation and sealing of the one, must include a Ratification of the other also." Circumcision was thus a seal of earthly promises to the earthly seed, but it also became a seal of the righteousness of faith to Abraham. Circumcision confirmed to Abraham that just as God would keep his promise to multiply Abraham's offspring according to the covenant of circumcision, so also he would keep his promise to give Abraham the spiritual offspring typified by the earthly offspring. In other words, it confirmed Abraham's faith in the promise of the gospel. Such a privilege pertained to Abraham alone as transacted in Genesis 12. No one else was the father of all believers, or the father of the Messiah in this sense. Thus circumcision did not seal the righteousness of faith "from its *next and peculiar End*, or its *proper Nature*," but through its typological connection to a separate covenant, the covenant of grace, and Abraham's unique role in it.[88]

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[84] Ibid. The usage of this phrase did not begin with Coxe and was not confined to Baptists. But it appeared more commonly in the Baptist literature after his work.

[85] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 106-107.

[86] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 105. Cf. 2LCF 7.3, "This Covenant is revealed in the Gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of Salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament."

[87] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 107. Coxe returned to this theme in his final chapter.

[88] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 108. This is very reminiscent of Cameron's explanation of typology relative to Old Testament ordinances. Coxe returned to interpreting circumcision as a seal at the end of his book. Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 184-195. In that section, he referred his reader to John Lightfoot's comments on 1 Corinthians 7:19. Cf. John Lightfoot, *Horæ Hebraicæ et Talmudicæ Impensæ in Epistolam Primam S. Pauli ad Corinthios* (Cambridge: Joan. Field, 1664), 47-49. This is interesting because in the

It was of utmost important to Coxe to maintain this typological connection and distinction. The seeds of Abraham and the covenantal promises belonging to each must be distinguished. The covenant of circumcision was directly related to the covenant of grace, indeed it was subordinate to it and typologically connected to it, but "Notwithstanding *the respect* this Covenant hath to the Covenant of Grace, it yet remains *distinct* from it; and can give no more then *external and typical Blessings unto a Typical Seed*."[89]

As to the covenant of circumcision itself, it was God's covenant to multiply Abraham's descendants and to give them the land of Canaan, promises which had been announced previously in Genesis 12, 13, and 15. This covenant was called "everlasting" in the same way that the Levitical priesthood or the gates of the temple were "everlasting."[90] The covenant would last until God's promises in it were fulfilled. Coxe argued that "There is therefore, no more Reason to conclude from *this Term* ["everlasting"], That the Covenant of Circumcision was directly and properly a Covenant of spiritual and eternal Blessings, than there is to affirm that the Land of *Canaan* and the good things thereof, were a spiritual and eternal inheritance."[91]

Added to a numerous seed, the "principal Blessing" covenanted in Genesis 17 was "*The forming of them into a Church-State*, with the Establishment of the Ordinances of publick Worship among them, wherein they should walk in a Covenant-Relation to God, as his peculiar People."[92] The covenant of circumcision was much more than people in a land. It may not have enabled them to "claim a Right in the spiritual and eternal Blessings of the New-Covenant…yet their *Priviledges* and *Advantages* in their Church-State, tho' immediately consisting in things outward and typical, were of far Greater Value and Use, than any meer worldly, or earthly Blessing." Their covenant gave them "choyce means of the Knowledg of God" and drew them "*nearer to* [God] than any Nation in the World besides."[93]

Appendix on Baptism at the end of the Second London Confession of Faith, the same reference was used, though there it was cited at length and translated from Latin. I am not aware of any other Particular Baptist writer who appealed to this portion of Lightfoot. If there is good reason to believe that Coxe had a chief hand in editing the Confession of Faith, this is a possible indication that the same was true of the Appendix on Baptism as well. Cf. Anon, *A Confession of Faith*, 119-125.

[89] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 109.

[90] He added later, "The Relation of the carnal Seed, to God, in an external, typical Covenant; the Inheritance of *Canaan* by virtue thereof; and the Seal of Circumcision; are all of one Date, and did all expire together." Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 120.

[91] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 112.

[92] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 112-113. Coxe qualified this statement by saying "understand it still of the old Covenant, wherein they had their peculiar Right and Priviledg."

[93] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 114.

After describing the covenant of circumcision's distinction from and relation to the covenant of grace, Coxe followed the current of Scriptural history and argued for his interpretation of Genesis 12-17 from subsequent passages of the Bible. His first main contention was that "The *mediate and remote Seed*" of Abraham were "as fully included, and interested [in the covenant], as the *immediate Seed*."[94]

Coxe had already argued that federal headship was the determining factor in covenantal membership, and had illustrated this in the covenant of works and the Noahic covenant. But to establish it here Coxe noted that the covenant was made to Abraham's seed "in their Generations." He said, "the *Right* of the remotest Generation, was as much derived from *Abraham*, and the Covenant made with him, as that of his immediate Seed was; and did not at all depend upon the *Faithfulness of their immediate Parents*." He proved this principle historically from the fact that after the Exodus the disobedient Jews were disinherited from Canaan, but their children were not.[95]

Not only was Abrahamic federal headship an important detail for understanding the covenant of peculiarity, but also the role that circumcision played in the covenant. Coxe contended that circumcision "was the *Entrance into*, and *Boundary of Communion* in the Jewish Church; and it was made so by the express Command of God himself."[96] It was a boundary because violation of this command resulted in being broken off from the covenant. It marked who was in the covenant and who was out of the covenant. As an entrance into the covenant, it obliged its bearers "to obey the Will of God so far as it was now made known…but also, to the Observation of all those Laws and Ordinances that were after delivered to them by Moses…For the circumcised Person was *a Debtor to keep the whole Law*: Gal. 5.3."[97]

Coxe used circumcision as a means of transitioning into an argument that the Mosaic and Levitical covenants were "enlargements" or "additions" relative to the Abrahamic covenant. Because circumcision marked out the people of God, and because the people of God were required to keep God's commands at whatever time they were imposed, and because the Mosaic covenant did not institute any visible sign of membership replacing circumcision, Coxe concluded that they were one and the same covenant.

He supported this argument from the Biblical record in which God delivered Israel from Egypt and brought them into Canaan "in *Remembrance* of his covenant with

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[94] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 117.

[95] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 118. He gave another instance of the Israelite parents that had sacrificed their children, children that God said belonged to him. Given that idolatry was a breach of covenant, the only way that the children of idolatrous parents could belong to the covenant was if they derived their covenant membership from the federal head, Abraham, not their parents.

[96] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 121.

[97] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 121-122.

Abraham."[98] In other words, God's later covenantal dealings with Israel were added to and founded on his covenant made with them in Abraham. And, Coxe argued, "that *Covenant of Peculiarity* is in the New Testament always styled *Old*, and *Carnal*; a Covenant from which the *Gospel Covenant* is *distinguished*; and to which it is *in many Respects opposed*: See *Jer*. 31.31-31. And *Heb*. 8.8-13."[99]

If later generations of Israelites were entitled to Abraham's covenant, if circumcision maintained a continuity of obligation to obedience and disinheritance for disobedience throughout those generations, and if God's later covenantal dealings were said to be founded on his covenant made with Abraham, Coxe concluded that the Mosaic covenant was an "*Inlargement* of the *Terms and Articles* of this Covenant…for that will not in the least infer any substantial Difference of this Covenant from the Covenant of Circumcision."[100] Rather, just as in Genesis 12 God summed up his covenant with Abraham's heavenly offspring but did not expand it and give it a system of ordinances until Christ, so also in Genesis 17 God summed up his covenant with Abraham's earthly offspring but expanded it and gave it a more complete system of ordinances through Moses.

Equating covenantal membership with circumcision raised the question of Ishmael, who was circumcised but not an heir of the promises. Coxe used Ishmael as an example to argue that no one can have a claim to the covenant without a claim to its promises. Thus, Ishmael and the servants and slaves of the Israelites were not members of the covenant because of their circumcision. Rather, they were circumcised simply according to God's positive command to do so despite God's equally clear statement that Ishmael was not the heir of the promises. Coxe asserted that it was necessary to align covenantal membership and a right to the promises of the covenant because "To suppose an Interest in the Covenant without a Right to the Promises thereof, is to introduce a meer Chimera or Fancy, instead of real Covenant-Interest."[101]

Coxe applied these principles in two ways. First, no one could argue that children are in the covenant of grace without arguing at the same time that they are recipients of the promises of the covenant of grace.[102] And second, because the covenant of circumcision included Abraham and his natural descendants and promised them the land of Canaan, if one appealed to Abraham's covenant for the covenant-interest of their children, they must assert that all of its earthly promises likewise apply to their children. He admitted

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[98] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 123-124.

[99] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 124.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 129.

[102] Coxe had previously argued that no one is in the covenant of grace except by union with Christ by the Holy Spirit and by faith. And he had argued that no one is in the covenant of grace without enjoying all of its benefits. Cf. Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 85-87.

that no one made a claim to Canaan for their children, but his point was that they should if they were to be consistent.

Coxe then returned to Abraham's federal headship. Abraham was not covenanted with as "a *private believing Parent*, but…to be *the Father of, and a Fœderal Root unto a Nation*, that for special Ends should be separated unto God by a *peculiar Covenant*."[103] Those who appealed to the covenant of circumcision as including believers and their children failed to recognize that even in Genesis 17 Ishmael was excluded from the covenant, as was Esau later. And in Esau's case this disinheritance was declared before birth. A parent claiming a right to Abraham's covenant today could not assume that all of their children had a right to the promises of the covenant because this was not so even in Abraham's time.

Coxe's arguments to this point related primarily to the details of the headship, membership, and ordinances of the covenant. He dedicated a portion of his book to addressing what exactly was promised to Abraham and his offspring when God declared that he would be "their God" and they would be "his people." This was necessary because so many paedobaptists drew a connection from Genesis 17 to Jeremiah 31 where in the new covenant God alike promises to be "their God" to a certain group that will be "his people."[104] For most paedobaptists, this was the substantial link between the old and new covenants.

Nehemiah pointed out that many of his previous assertions had already disproved this notion, but he wanted to give more time and attention to this particular question. To do so, he listed several points that built up to the larger conclusion. First, the covenant of grace had already been transacted with Abraham in Genesis 12 for himself and all believers. Second, this offspring of believers came from all nations, not the children according to the flesh. Third and fourth, God gave Abraham an earthly offspring for the "bringing forth of *that Seed* unto which the Promises of the New-Covenant did eminently appertain."[105] Fifth, this privilege would not be lost until Christ was born.[106] Sixthly, and lastly, "carnal Priviledges…*lay short of Interest in the Covenant of Grace*…For it was not a carnal Relation to *Abraham*, but *walking in the steps of his Faith*" that gave them a share in the covenant and its blessings.[107]

These building blocks demonstrated that "The *carnal*, and the *spiritual Seed*, as also the *Covenants* wherein their respective *Priviledges* are stated, were from the Beginning, *in their*

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[103] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 132.

[104] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 136.

[105] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 137.

[106] Coxe referred the reader to "Dr. *Owen's* Exercitations on the *Heb.* Vol. 1." This is likely a reference to the same passage used by Hutchinson and Delaune. Cf. Owen, *Exercitations*, 55.

[107] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 137-138.

own Nature, *distinct* the one from the other."[108] Two covenants with distinct parties and promises were distinct covenants. Yet because the covenant of circumcision was typical of the covenant of grace, some of the earthly offspring of Abraham were members of both covenants at the same time. The church-state of Abraham's earthly offspring was a "*typical Church*" within which "the *Covenants of Promise* were given to them and the way of Salvation by a Covenant of Grace thro' the promised Seed, was made known."[109] Thus the earthly children could know and believe the promise of the new covenant while living in and under the old covenant. For these believing Jews, the law of Moses did not condemn them, but trained them up as a pedagogue until the time of Christ.[110]

Following Owen, none were justified by the old covenant though they were justified under the old covenant. It was "*in*, *and by*, *it self insufficient and weak* as to the End of eternal Happiness, and the Justification of a Sinner before God." But they believed in "*that Promise* which the Covenant of Circumcision was but an Hand-Maid to."[111] This harmonizes well with Coxe's statement about the law in another work. He said,

> In the Mosaical œconomy, there was such a remembrance of the Covenant of works revived, with the terms and sanction thereof; as that hereupon it is called the ministration of condemnation, and did ingender unto Bondage, *2 Cor. 3.7. Gal. 4.25.* But yet the promise of Salvation by the *Messiah*, being made long before, was not enervated thereby; but even this was laid in subserviency to Gospel ends; and also the Gospel was preached to them, *Heb. 4.2.* (and so the covenant of grace revealed) though more darkly in types and shadows, through which they were instructed, to seek Justification unto Life by Christ promised, and so deliverance from the curse of the Law by him. Now amongst these some did believe, others did not; and so some were related to God in the New Covenant, others remained under the Old.[112]

The covenant of circumcision and its "enlargement," the Mosaic covenant, may have been covenants based on obedience, but they were never intended to justify their members.

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[108] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 139.

[109] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 139-140.

[110] Coxe said later, "The *Israel of God* among [Abraham's natural offspring], were taught to look above, and beyond their external Priviledges, unto those things that were shadowed by them, as set before their Faith in the Promises of Grace by Christ, and so to live upon the Grace of the Covenant, which their outward State, and Covenant of Peculiarity was subservient to; And unto them, all these things had a *spiritual*, *and evangelical Use*." Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 181.

[111] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 141.

[112] Coxe, *Vindiciae Veritatis*, 78-79.

They were subservient covenants promoting the revelation and historical progress of the covenant of grace.

Given these distinctions, when God pledges to be God to a people in covenant, one cannot instantly assume that this is the covenant of grace. Coxe argued that this is God's affirmation that "once ingaged in a Promise, there *all the Properties of his Nature* are ingaged respectively, for the making good of that Promise."[113] In other words, God will keep his commitments in the covenant. But this is so general that it applies to all covenants made between God and man. Following Owen, Coxe said, "You find this Promise equally and indifferently annexed both to the *Old Covenant* and *the New*; the *Covenant of Works* and *that of Grace*…There is no Reason therefore to conclude…every Covenant in which it is found, must be of the *Same Nature*."[114] Each covenant must be examined, and compared to others, by its particular promises, as Coxe had asserted at the beginning of his book.

When the old and new covenants are compared by their promises, they are distinct covenants. To be God to a people on the basis of federal union with Christ was different from being God to a people on the basis of federal union with Abraham. The old covenant "had ultimately a respect to spiritual Blessings…in a *Subserviency* to the Covenant of Grace…yet was it not *immediately and directly*, a Covenant of spiritual Blessings."[115] Because of this distinction and relation, "Many to whom the Lord *was a God* according to the Tenor of the Old Covenant, dyed in their Sins, and were eternally lost; But those *to whom he is a God*, according to the Tenor of the New Covenant, receive from him, the Blessings of a new Heart, Remission of Sins, and eternal Salvation."[116]

Coxe applied this to the controversy of baptism, arguing that though the privileges of the natural offspring of Abraham were many and marvelous, they were not sufficient to grant a right to the New Testament church or the covenant of grace. Abraham's children belonged "unto *the national and typical Church-state* of that People," a membership which "could never give to any, either Infant or Adult, a like Right of Membership in the Gospel Church."[117] Rather, "the true Church was impaled within the Bounds of the Common-wealth of *Israel*; which in its *intire Body* was a *typical* Church."[118]

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[113] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 144.

[114] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 145.

[115] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 152. Like Hutchinson, Coxe stated that it was gracious for God to grant the covenant of circumcision to Abraham. But it was not a covenant of saving grace. He said, "this was *a Covenant of Grace and Mercy*, as having its Original from the meer Goodness, and undeserved Favour of God…yet was it not *that Covenant of Grace*, which God made with *Abraham* for all his spiritual Seed." Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 151-152.

[116] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 148.

[117] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 158.

[118] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 182.

For Coxe, the covenant of circumcision was the first formation of a positively instituted church, a "*particular Society of Men* united in one Body, in order to the maintaining of the publick and solemn worship of God."[119] On this assumption, what were believers to assume about their children prior to the institution of the covenant of circumcision? And what of the children of believers at the time of Abraham who were not comprehended by the command of circumcision? And what of Abraham's relatives who were not circumcised? Coxe's emphasis was laid entirely on the positive institution of circumcision. It was a specific law for a specific group of people, and it could not be used as a pattern for the church in all ages when it wasn't even a pattern for the entirety of the universal church at the time of its institution. Coxe concluded his treatment of the covenant of circumcision, "As Circumcision of old Time was administred according to the positive Law, and express Will of the Lord; so ought Baptism to be now, and no otherwise; neither can I see any ground to conclude for *Pædobaptism*, until such a divine Law can be produced for the warrant of it."[120]

The covenant of circumcision was a covenant made with Abraham and his natural offspring through the lines of Isaac and Jacob, granting possession of Canaan and blessed life therein to successive generations so long as they obeyed the command of circumcision and all subsequent laws of positive institution. The covenant of circumcision typologically portrayed a transnational offspring of Abraham to whom the inheritance of heaven belonged. It constituted a "typical church," a term John Owen had used, from which the promised Seed would be born, and was guaranteed to ever last until the fulfillment of God's promises and "the *Succession* of the Gentile Church unto the Church of the Jews, who were to be disinherited of all Covenant-Interest for their rejecting of the Messiah."[121] All that remained in Coxe's work was to revisit and develop the typological and subservient nature of the covenant of circumcision.

Of The Mutual Respect of the Promises Made to Abraham

Subservience and typology were prominent, if not dominant, themes in Coxe's treatment of the covenants. After the fall, Coxe argued, all covenants were subservient to the covenant of grace in historical progress and typological revelation. This was so in the Noahic covenant and in the covenant of circumcision. A proper interpretation of this typology accurately distinguished earthly temporary institutions and covenants from their heavenly and eternal counterparts. For Coxe, this produced Particular Baptist

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[119] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 158.

[120] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 160.

[121] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 63. Elsewhere, Coxe spoke of "the *Abrogation* of the *Sinai*-Covenant, and *dissolving* of the Jewish Church-state; that so the Inheritance of spiritual Blessings might be clearly devolved upon the children of God by Faith in Jesus Christ." Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 178.

covenant theology. The old and new covenants were closely related, but distinct. This typology was identical to that of paedobaptist covenant theology in many of its treatments of the Mosaic covenant.

In his final chapter, Nehemiah explained that the intermixture of the earthly and heavenly promises in the Old Testament in general and the covenant of circumcision in particular was to be expected. He described this connection as "The *typical Respect and Analogy of the Covenant of Peculiarity unto the Covenant of Grace*, as after to be more fully revealed, and accomplished in Christ."[122] The federal head and source of the spiritual blessings in the covenant of grace, Jesus Christ, was promised to be born from the federal head and source of the Israelites' earthly blessings, Abraham. It was natural, therefore, that the earthly context in which the Messiah would be born would be anticipatory of and preparatory for his manifestation.[123] These statements were essentially a justification of his specific and selective statements about which verses related to which covenants in Genesis 12 and 17.

Bringing his entire book to a conclusion, Coxe spent the remainder of his ink discussing other biblical passages as confirmatory illustrations of his hermeneutical principles. Drawing from Colossians 2, Coxe stated that "Circumcision did not only oblige to the keeping of the Law…but did also (as subservient to the Promise) point at the *Messiah*…that thro' Faith in his Name such a Righteousness [that circumcision required] might be obtained."[124] Thus Coxe took the circumcision with which believers are circumcised "in Christ" (Colossians 2:11) to be justification, the reception of Christ's perfect obedience to the law.[125] Coxe appealed to Paul's typology of shadows and substance in Colossians to confirm his assertion that circumcision was an old covenant obligation of legal obedience which Christ fulfilled and annulled.

In Galatians 4 Coxe found a clear statement of a dual seed belonging to Abraham, an earthly seed and a heavenly seed. And he found this seed distinguished into two covenants. The earthly seed was typological of the heavenly seed. Turning back one chapter, Coxe argued that in Galatians 3, there is a covenant made known in the Gospel and confirmed in Christ, a covenant made in Genesis 12. And there is a covenant wherein circumcision is instituted which Paul "expressly" called "*the Law*."[126] For Nehemiah, then, there was a clear scriptural argument for distinguishing Abraham's earthly and heavenly offsprings into two distinct covenants, the covenant of grace and the covenant of circumcision. Coxe argued that if the earthly privileges could not entitle one to the

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[122] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 169.

[123] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 162-167.

[124] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 171.

[125] He added that he did not deny that it was also typological of sanctification, the believer's growth in holiness and obedience.

[126] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 176-178.

heavenly privileges in Abraham's day, that is, if the bondservant and freeborn offsprings were entitled to distinct promises, then "The carnal Seed of Believers, can obtain no greater Priviledg by the *Covenant of Circumcision*, than the Seed of *Abraham by Isaac had*."[127]

This typological hermeneutic was necessary for interpreting God's covenantal dealings with Abraham, but Coxe noted that it was also necessary for "the opening, and right Application of very many Prophecies, and Promises of the Old Testament."[128] The prophetic idiom was especially demonstrative of the close connection and interwoven nature of types and antitypes. The antitypes were "spoken of in prophetical Scriptures, under the names of those Things, and that People, which were the Types of them; And the Promise of the choicest Gospel-blessings…of the New Testament Church, are given forth to *Israel of old* in those Terms that did *suit the present State* of things."[129] Coxe's desire was to establish a canonical hermeneutic that faithfully dealt with the entirety of God's revelation. Thus, whether one began before Genesis 17 or long after it, the same principles would be employed in biblical interpretation.

This helped greatly to break the covenantal debate out of its narrow and tunnel-vision treatments of Genesis 17. And, perhaps more importantly, the canonically-conscious hermeneutics Coxe employed were not particularly Baptist. They were common Protestant and Reformed principles of biblical interpretation.

Given all of Coxe's arguments from Adam to Abraham, the idea that the old and new covenants were the same covenant, differing only in their outward administrations was an overly simplistic impossibility.[130] He concluded,

> *The Old Covenant, is not the New,* nor that which is *abolished*, the same with that which *remains*; and till *these become one*, *Baptism and Circumcision* will never be found *so far one*, as that the *Law* for applying *this*, should be *a sufficient Warrant* for the Administration of *that*, unto Infants.[131]

Conclusion

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[127] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 181.

[128] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 182.

[129] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 183.

[130] Referring to Galatians, Coxe said, "if the Controversie had been about the *Mode of administring* the same Covenant, and the *Change* only of an *external Rite*, by bringing *Baptism* into the place of *Circumcision*, to serve for the same use and End now, as that had done before, the heat of their Contests might soon have been allayed; especially considering the latter is far less painful and dangerous than the former." Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 193.

[131] Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 194-195.

In Coxe's covenant theology, two distinct covenants were transacted with Abraham and his twofold offspring. The covenant of grace was materially "revealed" to Abraham and "made" with him and his spiritual seed, but the covenant of circumcision was formally established with Abraham and his natural seed. This covenant was a national covenant of works, designed to bring about the Messiah. It began with the observation of circumcision and developed into the full complex of the old covenant. Failure to obey meant disinheritance from Canaan. Under the Abrahamic and Mosaic old covenant, the covenant of works was materially revived and remembered, but not formally made. Likewise, the covenant of grace was materially promised and portrayed, but not formally made.

When Coxe's presentation of the Abrahamic covenant is combined with Owen's presentation of the Mosaic covenant, as Coxe intended it, the pieces fall into place. In Owen's system, the Mosaic old covenant was abrogated and removed. In Coxe's system, that abrogation entails the abrogation of the Abrahamic old covenant as well. This alleviated the tensions of the leftover breakable external administration in Owen's new covenant. For Coxe and the Particular Baptists, the church consisted only of Abraham's spiritual seed, those who believe, those with whom the covenant of grace was "properly" and "really" and "effectually" made. False believers did not break the covenant, but rather it was not "properly," "really," or "effectually" made with them, and thus they simply manifested that which was already true—the covenant was not made with them.

Coxe's work on the covenants was an important book in Baptist theology. It was the first book by a Particular Baptist to deal with the covenants in a systematic fashion, following the format of the classic Reformed treatises on covenants. Because of this, Nehemiah was the only Particular Baptist in the seventeenth century to exposit the covenant of works and the Noahic covenant in detail.

Because Coxe avoided a polemical style in his book, the relation of his covenant theology to the Reformed tradition is evident less by contrast and more by congruity. Conversant in the classic and modern literature of his day, Coxe built positively on developments in covenant theology, following John Owen closely in many ways.[132] By appropriating the style of Reformed treatises on covenant, by refusing to address covenant theology polemically, and by appealing to Reformed writers in his work, Coxe's work was a silent statement that his covenant theology belonged to the Reformed tradition. His irenic preface declared his view of paedobaptists as fellow brethren, and even his antipaedobaptist arguments were presented without bitterness. These factors indicate that in Coxe's view Reformed covenant theology did not need to be undone and

[132] Coxe appealed positively to Johannes Cocceius, Andrew Rivet, Theodore Beza, the Heidelberg Catechism, Henry Ainsworth, Martin Luther, William Strong, John Owen, Franciscus Junius, and John Lightfoot.

overcome, but built on, attuned, and harmonized.[133] This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that Coxe only appealed to paedobaptist writers, avoiding citation of any Baptists in his work.[134]

Coxe's book was the definitive Particular Baptist work on the Abrahamic covenant. Contemporary and subsequent Baptist authors such as William Kiffen, Charles Marie du Veil, Thomas Grantham, Philip Cary, Benjamin Keach, Richard Dean, Benjamin Dennis, and William Russel quoted Coxe's work and relied upon it.[135] In 1699, nearly twenty years after its publication and near the close of the first two generations of the Particular Baptists, Benjamin Keach praised Coxe's work as the standard of excellence among Particular Baptist covenantal writings. He said "Many have wrote upon the two Covenants, but how cloudily and darkly is palpable to many; tho others have excellently opened them, amongst which the Reverend Mr. *Nehemiah Cox* in my Judgment hath exceeded; yet his Stile seems a little too high for ordinary Capacities."[136]

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[133] As the son of an Oxford graduate and Puritan, Coxe had extra reasons to view himself and his theology in continuity with the Reformed tradition. This again represents the same mindset used to edit 2LCF.

[134] This is an argument from silence. It could be argued oppositely that Coxe did not look favorably on the Particular Baptists' covenantal literature. This is unlikely, however, given that Coxe clearly teaches the common model of Particular Baptist covenant theology.

[135] Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse of Right to Church-Communion* (London: Geo. Larkin, 1681), 30. Charles-Marie Du Veil, *A Literal Explanation of the Acts of the Holy Apostles* (London: Francis Pearse, 1685), 92. Du Veil called Coxe "that great Divine, eminent for all manner of Learning." Thomas Grantham, *Truth and Peace: Or The Last and most Friendly Debate Concerning Infant-Baptism* (London: n.p., 1689), 6, 9, 11. Grantham called Coxe a "learned Writer." Philip Cary, *A Solemn Call Unto all that would be owned as Christ's Faithful Witnesses, speedily, and seriously, to attend unto the Primitive Purity of the Gospel Doctrine and Worship: Or, a Discourse concerning Baptism* (London: John Harris, 1690), 52, 54-56, 208-210. Deane, *A Copy of a Brief Treatise*, 58. I have not been able to locate Dennis' work, *Brief Remarks upon the Epistle of Mr. Fran. Mence's Book, Intituled, Vindiciæ Fœderis* (1695). However, he is quoted as saying "The Learned Mr. N. Cox hath so solidly opened this Covenant of peculiarity made with Abraham" in Giles Shute, *Infant-baptism and Church-Membership* (London: J.R., 1695), 16. William Russel, *A Vindication of the Baptized Churches, From the Calumnies of Mr. Michael Harrison* (London: n.p., 1697), 25-30, 32-33, 38. Russel called Coxe "The late learned Dr. Neh. Coxe." He quoted extended portions of Coxe's work "for the sake of those who have not his Book to inform them, nor are likely to obtain, because it's out of print." Several authors in the eighteenth century referred to Coxe's work. Samuel Ewer, *An Answer to Mr. Edward Hitchin's Book, Intituled The Infants Cause pleaded, clear'd and vindicated, &c.* (London: 1710), 23. Ewer called Coxe's work "a judicious discourse." Thomas Davye, *The Baptism of Adult Believers Only, Asserted and Vindicated* (London: John Darby, 1719), 26. Davye actually quotes Du Veil's citation of Coxe. John Martin, *A View of the Evidences of Believers Baptism* (London: J. Martin, 1796), 49.

[136] Robert Prudom, *Truth Unvail'd by Scripture-Light* (London: John Marshall, 1699), iv. Keach wrote a preface to this book, dated 5 June, 1699. Keach quoted Nehemiah Coxe and called him a "Reverend and Learned Writer" in Keach, *The Ax laid to the Root Part II* (London: John Harris, 1693), 7-8, 12-13. Cf. Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 85-87, 112-114.

Chapter Seven: The Second Confessional Writers (1680-1704)

Introduction

The publication of the Second London Baptist Confession in 1677 marked a point of transition in the Particular Baptists' movement. Having begun in the 1630s and 1640s, many of the first-generation of Particular Baptists were dead or "ancient and decayed" by the 1680s. Men like William Kiffen and Hanserd Knollys lived to a considerable age, but by the 1670s and 1680s a new generation had arisen to take their places. The elder pastors were proactive in preparing the younger men. According to Ivimey, the London elders sent out a circular letter in 1675 calling for a meeting the following year "with a view to form a plan for the providing an orderly standing ministry in the church, who might give themselves to reading and study, and so become able ministers of the new testament."[1] Having enjoyed university educations in their youth, the Baptists sought to provide ministerial training and education for the next wave of pastors.

Despite the concerted and proactive efforts of the senior generation to pave a smooth path for their successors, the younger generation arose in a difficult time. In 1678, an Anglican justice of the peace, Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey (1621-1678), was found dead in a ditch, stabbed with a sword. Not long before his disappearance and demise, Godfrey had been informed by Titus Oates (1649-1705) that Roman Catholics were actively infiltrating England and had contrived a systematic conspiracy to overturn the Protestant faith. Many drew a direct connection between these two events and suspected that the plot was already in motion, reaching the highest levels of the government. From 1678-1681, England's populace was captivated by the prospect of this "Popish Plot."[2]

The people feared that Charles II would be murdered, and that his Catholic brother, James, would inherit the throne. On 15 May, 1679, the Earl of Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, proposed an Exclusion Bill in the House of Commons to exclude James from inheriting the throne. The bill passed the House of Commons, but was rejected in the House of Lords on 15 November. Complicating these difficulties was the fact that Charles II prorogued parliament to avoid the issue. As a result, The Earl of Shaftesbury led a campaign to petition the king to let parliament sit so that it could investigate and respond to the supposed threat of Rome's return to the English throne.

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[1] Ivimey, *A History of the English Baptists*, I:415-416.

[2] To many, it was not until the "Glorious Revolution" and the downfall of James II that the popish plot ended. Cf. Keach, *Distressed Sion Relieved* (London: Nath. Crouch, 1689). In this work, Keach recounts with horror and sadness the events of the previous decade, and rejoices in the recent enthronement of William and Mary.

This petition, rounded up in January, 1680, became known as the "Monster Petition" during the "Exclusion Crisis," and it was signed by more than 20,000 inhabitants of London.[3] Charles II did not heed the petition, but recoiled at its implied message that the king was not sufficient to the task and that Parliament was needed for the proper ruling of the land at the time.[4] Nehemiah Coxe and other Baptist ministers signed the petition.[5]

As Charles II's reign drew to a close, persecution increased. The Particular Baptist assemblies were regularly visited and disrupted by the authorities who prosecuted them under the Corporation and Conventicle acts. In 1682, the Petty France church was convicted twice for holding a "conventicle," i.e., an illegal religious meeting.[6] The church minute book records on 20 March, 1683 that their meeting was disturbed, and they were soon prevented from meeting in Petty France for a significant span of time.[7] It was in this time of persecution that Thomas Delaune and his family were imprisoned and died.

The accession of James II to the throne in 1685 provided juxtaposed curses and blessings for the Baptists. William Kiffen suffered bitterly that year when his two grandsons, William and Benjamin Hewling, were executed for participation in the rebellion led by the Duke of Monmouth. But many Baptists were thankful when James published *A Declaration for Liberty of Conscience* in April, 1687, completely suspending the laws that punished nonconformists and prevented them from participating in government offices. Within two weeks of publishing *A Declaration for Liberty of Conscience*,

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[3] The petition is held by the Huntington Library in San Marino, CA. HL Mss HM 68.

[4] For more on this, see Mark Knights, "London's 'Monster' Petition of 1680" in *The Historical Journal*, vol. 36, No. 1 (Mar., 1993): 39-67.

[5] In addition to the signatures of many members of Particular Baptist churches, the petition includes those of Hercules Collins, Daniel Dyke, Isaac Marlow, William Collins, and Laurence Wise. This contextualizes Coxe's comments in the preface to *A Discourse of the Covenants* where he said, "The Publication of this little Tract, hath been so long delayed…partly by those Perplexities which the restless Plots of the Papists, and their bold Attempts to overwhelm us with the worst of Miseries, have caused." Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, v.

[6] LMA, CLA/047/LR/02/02/008, Certificates of Conventicle Convictions. Hanserd Knollys, who was known to preach in various Particular Baptist churches, was fined for being the preacher on 26 October. William Collins was fined for being present, though no mention of teaching is made, on 3 November. An example of one of these convictions from the Devonshire Square church is pictured, transcribed, and translated from the Latin in Kreitzer, *William Kiffen and his World*, I:308-314. I am indebted to Dr. Kreitzer for pointing me to these sources.

[7] On 27 May, the church decided, "In regard of the uncertaintye of our obtaining conveniencyes of meeting as formerly by reason of the present persecution, & our exclusion fro[m] Pett[y] Fr[ance] that…our usual times of breaking bread be altered fro[m] 3 weeks, to once every moneth." Memoranda and Minutes of Petty France, 21.

the Baptists were the first to respond with a public address of thanksgiving, followed by several others in the ensuing months.[8]

James' declaration was the source of a national controversy and eventually contributed directly to his downfall. His repeal of the Penal Laws and Test Act was deemed illegal because it removed an act of Parliament.[9] Fears of anti-popery were fomented, accusations of arbitrary authority were leveled, and the road was straightened for William of Orange to be declared a deliverer of the nation.[10]

With the Act of Toleration put into place by William and Mary in 1689, a truly legal freedom was established for the Particular Baptists. They quickly organized a general assembly that year and began to enjoy life as a public association of churches.[11] Sadly, however, as troubles decreased without, they increased within. In the early 1690s, a controversy regarding the singing of religious songs in the formal assembled worship of the church split the London association and alienated lifelong friends.[12] This division was a deathblow to the Particular Baptists. And by 1704 not only were nearly all of the leaders of the second generation of Particular Baptists dead, but the London association was nearly nonexistent as well.[13] The Bristol association persevered and perpetuated the model of Baptist confessional associationalism for many decades.

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[8] *The London Gazette* #2234 (Thursday, 14 April to Monday, 18 April 1687), 1. This was presented to James II by Nehemiah Coxe and William Collins on behalf of "a great Number of the most considerable Anabaptists." For other addresses of thanksgiving from Particular Baptists, see *The London Gazette* #2255 (Monday, 27 June to Thursday, 30 June 1687), 1; *The London Gazette* #2294 (Thursday, 10 November to Monday, 14 November 1687), 1. The June address claimed to represent "many Thousands of the same Persuasion" from "Middlesex, Hertford, Bucks, Oxon, Warwick, Northampton, Lincoln, Huntington, Bedford, Cambridge, Essex, Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Southampton, and Dorset." The November address represented Baptists in Oxford, Abingdon, and Wantage.

[9] It was acknowledged that James could "dispense" the laws in individual cases, but not suspend them entirely.

[10] On the reign of James II and the controversy of religious toleration see, Scott Sowerby, *Making Toleration: The Repealers and the Glorious Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[11] On the London general assemblies and the documents they produced, see James M. Renihan, ed., *Faith and Life for Baptists: The Documents of the London Particular Baptist General Assemblies 1689-1694* (Palmdale, CA: Reformed Baptist Academic Press, 2016).

[12] On the singing controversy, see Arnold, *Benjamin Keach*, 8-9. Arnold provides a short bibliography of works on this subject.

[13] Nehemiah Coxe died in 1689; Hanserd Knollys died in 1691; Henry Forty died in 1693; Thomas Edwards, Elias Keach, and Robert Steed died in 1699; George Barrett died in 1700; William Kiffen died in 1701; Benjamin Dennis and Thomas Harrison died in August, 1702; William Collins and Hercules Collins died in October 1702; Benjamin Keach died in 1704. John Piggott, who preached the funeral sermons of Thomas Harrison, Hercules Collins, and William Collins, noted the severity of the timing of their deaths. He said "God is teaching us by terrible things in Righteousness. And we shall discover great Stupidity, if we do not observe how God hath broken us with Breach upon Breach: He hath remov'd both Younger and Elder Ministers." Piggott, *Eleven Sermons*, 238.

In these years of fears, freedoms, and fights, the baptismal debate continued. Three prominent figures, Philip Cary, Hercules Collins, and Benjamin Keach serve to represent the Particular Baptists' covenant theology. These authors were participants in the first general assembly in 1689 and pastors of churches connected with the Second London Baptist Confession.

Philip Cary

A Disputation Between a Doctor and an Apothecary

Philip Cary (fl. 1682-1692) was an apothecary and minister in a Baptist church in Dartmouth. In 1682, Cary and a Presbyterian Doctor named Richard Burthogge were called to attend to a sick gentleman.[14] The Doctor desired to debate the issue of baptism with Cary, and was encouraged to do so by the wife of the infirmed gentleman. Cary and Burthogge began a discussion at the house and continued the debate in private letters, lasting into January 1683. In 1684, Burthogge published some of his own letters as an argument for infant baptism in which he cited portions of Cary's letters.[15]

Burthogge claimed to be breaking new ground, not in the matter of his argument, but the method. Key to Burthogge's argument was the idea that the covenant of grace was not covenanted until Genesis 17. It was not until this time that a restipulation, circumcision, was combined with the promise of the gospel. "*It did not please God to transact with all, or any of the antient…Fathers, in a way of* Covenant *for Grace, Eternal Life and Salvation before* Abraham."[16] In support of this, Burthogge alleged that the promise of the woman's seed in Genesis 3:15 was not "spoken by way of *Promise* to *Adam*, but by way of *denunciation* to the Serpent."[17] Burthogge was not denying the salvation of Old

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[14] It is not clear if Cary was a minister at this time. His name represented the Dartmouth church in the Narratives of the 1689 and 1692 General Assemblies. Anon., *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly* (London: n.p., 1689), 20; Anon., *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the General Assembly* (London: n.p., 1692), 15. Little else is known about Cary.

[15] Richard Burthogge, *An Argument For Infants Baptisme, Deduced from the Analogy of Faith, And Harmony of the Scriptures* (London: Jonathan Greenwood, 1684).

[16] Burthogge, *An Argument For Infants Baptisme*, 99. Cf. "In this Covenant, as in all others that are Proper, there is, First, *A Promise* on the One Part, and then, Secondly, A *Restipulation* on the Other; A Promise on God's Part; and then a Restipulation upon *Abraham's* Part, and upon his Seed's." Burthogge, *Vindiciae Poedo-Baptismi: Or, A Confirmation of An Argument Lately Emitted for Infants Baptism: In a Letter To a Reverend Divine of The Church of England* (London: Thomas Simmons, 1685), 36.

[17] Burthogge, *An Argument For Infants Baptisme*, 104. Burthogge doubted if Adam was present to hear this promise.

Testament believers prior to Abraham.[18] He was trying to emphasize that without an outward sign for the covenant, there was no actual covenant.

Because Genesis 17 was the first establishment of the covenant of grace, it was the definitive ground for understanding its nature and its administration. With this foundation, Burthogge's primary argument was that in Genesis 17 God commanded Abraham and his seed, natural and spiritual, to keep the covenant by dedicating themselves and their families to God through the application of an outward sign. This general principle was made particular in circumcision, and later in baptism.[19] "God did *no sooner*…transact with man in way of Covenant for Eternal Life and Salvation…but he obliged those in that Covenant, to *keep it* in the sign, and that from the beginning…for *Parents*…he did ordain *it* should be put on the *Children* also."[20]

Cary replied the same year by publishing a more complete record of their correspondence containing his own letters and much of Burthogge's letters. His critique centered around two basic arguments. First, the command to circumcise in Genesis 17 was directed to Abraham and his natural descendants in particular. It was not a general command to keep the covenant with an outward sign for parents and children. Thus, it was not a command to the spiritual seed, nor did it encompass baptism. Second, even if it were granted that the Abrahamic covenant were the covenant of grace, the New Testament command to baptize demanded profession of faith and thus contradicted the command to circumcise.[21] Cary criticized Burthogge's manipulation of the clear reading of the text, remarking that it was "Astonishing that so clear and piercing an Eye should see a Command for Infants Baptism in Gen. 17. and not to be able to discern the Covenant of Grace in Gen. 3.15."[22]

Burthogge replied in 1685.[23] The exchange, by that point, was a "'Yes, it is'—'No, it isn't'" conversation without significant substance on either side. The debate was characterized by sarcasm, *ad hominem* remarks, and medical analogies designed as mild

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[18] He stated that they were saved in the covenant of redemption. Burthogge, *An Argument For Infants Baptisme*, 99.

[19] "I have told you ten time over, that I understand the keeping of the Covenant there *generally*, for keeping of it in the *sign* of it (whatever the sign at any time be,) and not *particularly* and *determinately*, for keeping of it immediately either in Circumcision, or in Baptism." Burthogge, *An Argument For Infants Baptisme*, 160-161.

[20] Burthogge, *An Argument For Infants Baptisme*, 110-111.

[21] Philip Cary, *A Disputation Between a Doctor And an Apothecary: Or A Reply to the New Argument of Dr. R. Burthogge, M.D. For Infants Baptism; Wherein the Novelty in which it glories, is justly censured, and its Harmony proved to be no better than self Repugnancy, and a manifest abuse of Scripture* (London: B.W., 1684), 29.

[22] Cary, *A Disputation*, vii of an unpaginated preface.

[23] Burthogge, *Vindiciae Poedo-Baptismi*.

insults.[24] Cary knew some Latin, but admitted he did not know Greek and Hebrew. Burthogge had the benefit of a university education, and Cary repeatedly spoke in a sarcastic tone of deference to his "superior," the doctor.

Cary's critique of Burthogge was almost entirely reactionary but lacked any serious engagement on the identity of the Abrahamic covenant relative to the covenant of grace. His comments almost seem to grant the premise and restrict themselves to the battlefront of positive law alone. At one point, Burthogge acknowledged that Cary did not view the Abrahamic covenant as the covenant of grace because "it is a *Mixt* one, and composed of a *Temporal* (as well as of an *Eternal*) Bequest."[25] However, other than this comment, the debate did not center around whether the Abrahamic covenant was the covenant of grace. It was not until a few years later that Cary expressed a covenant theology more in line with the standard model of Particular Baptist thought.[26] By that time, also, he had read Nehemiah Coxe.[27]

A Solemn Call and A Just Reply

Six years after his first dive into the baptismal debate, Cary published another treatise on the subject.[28] The primary occasion for this work, Cary stated, was the publication of the former Baptist William Allen's (d. 1686) *A Serious and Friendly Address to the Nonconformists, Beginning with the Anabaptists. Or an Addition to a former Treatise of his;*

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[24] E.g., "And verily, Sir, 'tis matter of admiration to me…how all the Sense, Reason and Harmony came to be center'd within the compass of *your Pericranium*; and that in so searching and critical an Age, and in so celebrated and long bandied a Controversie as this, no Man should be so fortunate, to light upon the solid grounds of sound Reason, good Sense, and Scripture Harmony, before or besides your self." Cary, *A Disputation*, 9.

[25] Burthogge, *An Argument For Infants Baptisme*, 13.

[26] It is worth noting that Cary did appeal to the covenant of redemption and covenant of grace. Cary, *A Disputation*, 121.

[27] Given that the letters between Cary and Burthogge were written in 1682, it is possible Cary had read Coxe by then. However, if he had, he did not appeal to Coxe, nor do his arguments demonstrate a resemblance. Cary's later works explicitly appealed to Coxe. See more below.

[28] Though published in 1691, *A Solemn Call* was completed, or near completion, by the end of 1688. Benjamin Keach wrote on 6 August, 1688 that "There is a most excellent Treatise prepared, written by a very worthy and judicious Person (and ready for a timely birth) wherein that grand Objection, and all others are answered (beyond what any I think have hitherto done)." Given Keach's endorsement of Cary's book, as well as the similarities in their federal theology, Keach is likely referring to *A Solemn Call*. The delay of Cary's *A Solemn Call* from 1688 to 1690 probably resulted from the tumultuous events of the collapse of James II's reign and the Glorious Revolution. Cf. Keach, *Gold Refin'd; Or, Baptism in its Primitive Purity* (London: Nathaniel Crouch, 1689), v of an unpaginated preface.

Entituled, a Perswasive to Peace and Unity.[29] Cary set out to face Allen's arguments, who had recently died, as well as those of the Independent Cuthbert Sydenham (1622-1654),[30] Richard Baxter, and his old opponent Richard Burthogge.

Three prefaces were attached to this work. The first was signed by William Kiffen, John Harris, Richard Adams, Robert Steed, and Benjamin Keach, the second by an unknown author, M.E., and the last by Cary himself. Each of these prefaces acknowledged that Cary was building on the work of previous authors in order to "Collect the Sum or Substance of what hath been already said…and to present it to thy View in one Intire Piece."[31] *A Solemn Call* was indeed a collection. It contained copied sections from the books of John Tombes, Henry Danvers, Edward Hutchinson, and Nehemiah Coxe. Cary consistently referenced Coxe's work, but never mentioned the names, books, or page numbers of Danvers' and Hutchinsons' works.[32]

Whereas in his interaction with Burthogge Cary did not address the question of the relationship of the Abrahamic covenant to the covenant of grace, in this work it was his primary focus. Noting that "the greatest part of the most plausible Arguments for the support of Infants Baptism" contended that the old covenant differed from the new "only in the manner of Administration," it was Cary's aim to prove that the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant were not administrations of the covenant of grace, but "Repetitions" of the covenant of works made with Adam. Consequently, these covenants were "contra-distinct, or essentially different from the Covenant of Grace."[33]

Cary divided his treatise into five parts, the first three of which dealt with the subject from a reactionary standpoint. Cary listed the arguments and objections of Allen and others, replying as he went. The final two sections developed a more positive case,

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[29] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, vii of an unpaginated preface. William Allen, *A Serious and Friendly Address to the Nonconformists, Beginning with the Anabaptists. Or an Addition to a former Treatise of his; Entituled, a Perswasive to Peace and Unity* (London: J.M., 1676). Allen was an elder in a congregational church, but in 1653 he was convinced by Samuel Fisher, a Particular Baptist who later became a Quaker, to become a Baptist. Allen joined with the General Baptists, working with Thomas Lambe. In later years, Allen returned to the paedobaptist position and took up a place in the Church of England after the Restoration. Allen had close ties to Baxter with whom he corresponded. On Allen, see N. H. Keeble, 'Allen, William (d. 1686)', *ODNB*.

[30] On Sydenham, see J. T. Peacey, 'Sydenham, Cuthbert (bap. 1623, d. 1654)', *ODNB*.

[31] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, ii of an unpaginated preface.

[32] If one were not familiar with the literature, the copied sections would go entirely unnoticed. For more on Cary's inconsistent citation methods, see below.

[33] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, ii of an unpaginated preface. It is likely, therefore, that Cary saw himself picking up where Coxe left off. Coxe had stated that a vindication of the substantial difference between the old and new covenants required a larger handling than he intended, and referred his reader to Owen. Though Cary appealed to Owen and Coxe, his own statement of building on others' work as well as his primary focus on proving the old and new covenants to differ in substance likely indicates that he intended to complete what Coxe had started.

arguing that the Abrahamic covenant, the covenant made with Israel at Sinai, and the renewing of that covenant in Moab were "editions" of the original covenant of works made with Adam in Eden.

The first of the five parts replied to William Allen's arguments from Matthew 19:14, Romans 11:16-17, Acts 2:38-39, 1 Corinthians 7:14, Colossians 2:11, and the legitimacy of consequences in establishing worship. In each of these, Cary offered the standard and common arguments already in use for decades.[34]

The second part focused on eight arguments for infant baptism as well as twenty objections made by paedobaptists to Baptist arguments.[35] The recurring theme of Cary's responses was the transition from the Old Testament church to the New Testament church. By choosing to react and respond to the paedobaptists rather than to build his own case positively, Cary unintentionally obscured his positions at times. For example, Cary employed "that known and allowed Distinction, Concerning the *Substance* of the Covenant, and the *Administration* of it."[36] The Particular Baptists never denied the validity of this distinction, but they rejected its application to the old and new covenants. However, Cary used this distinction to argue that the church was one in substance, internally, in the Old and New Testaments yet differing in its outward administration.[37]

This gave the appearance of directly appropriating the paedobaptist model. However, Cary added that in the Jewish church, Abraham's double paternity was active via two different covenants, the "Covenant of *Promise*" and the "Covenant of Circumcision" which was "*Typical* and *Temporary*."[38] Thus when Christ came, the same church continued, but the covenant of circumcision was abrogated. And because the covenant of circumcision was abrogated, its commands and subjects no longer held a place in the church. Cary's use of the distinction between substance and administration, then, was far from an appropriation of the paedobaptist model. Rather, it was a rejection of the same, a rejection obscured somewhat by his polemical style.

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[34] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 1-21. He argued that the great commission, combined with the testimony of the apostle's actions in Acts, demonstrated a pattern of baptism following teaching. Peter's proclamation of the promise to the Jews and their children was framed by the Jews' self-malediction when they demanded Christ's crucifixion, and was limited by the effectual calling of God. The holiness of spouses and children referred to a marital legitimacy and cleanliness, and if the holiness were granted to be covenantal in some way, it would apply equally to the unbelieving spouse. Baptism did not replace circumcision as another form of the same thing, but rather it fulfilled what circumcision pointed to. Circumcision was a mark in the flesh of a people defined by natural descent which pointed to a purification made without hands for a people defined by supernatural descent. Consequences and analogies could not establish positive laws, and they certainly could not be used in a way that contradicted explicit commands and scriptural examples.

[35] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 23-85.

[36] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 25.

[37] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 27.

[38] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 28.

Cary used this model of the abrogation of the Jewish national covenants in the church's transition from the Old Testament to the New to refute the objection that if infants were denied baptism the New Testament administration was narrower than that of the old. Cary argued that the covenant always included the elect, internally. This did not change. In the New Testament, the external administration of the covenant broadened to include not just the family of Abraham, but the whole world. The rejection of Abrahamic paternity was the removal of a separate covenant, not a narrowing of the covenant of grace.[39]

Here Cary copied Henry Danvers' response to the objection that as the seed of believers under the old covenant received the sign of the covenant, so the seed of believers under the new covenant ought to receive the sign of the covenant.[40] Danvers was aiming at God's covenantal dealings with Abraham, asserting that "*Abraham* by Promise stood in a double Capacity" which made him "a natural Father unto the *Jews*" and "a Spiritual Father." Danvers continued, "So accordingly, the Promises made unto *Abraham*, were of two sorts; some respecting his Natural Seed…And others again respecting in a peculiar manner, the Spiritual Seed."[41] This argument had been used by previous authors, particularly Benjamin Coxe, Kiffen, and Knollys in 1645, but Cary's language, as he continued, seemed to follow that of Nehemiah Coxe's closely. Cary continued to explain that "It is of great moment in the present Case, rightly to distinguish, and truly to apply the several Promises God made unto *Abraham*, according to their proper Subjects."[42]

After copying Danvers and building on Coxe's work, Cary proceeded to copy, again without citation, nearly three pages of Edward Hutchinson's book.[43] The portion Cary copied was Hutchinson's distinction of the covenant into its substance and administration, wherein he argued that one cannot simply apply the sign of the covenant to all of its members. There were some in Abraham's covenant, such as women, who did not receive the sign yet had a full right to its promises. And there were some, such as Ishmael, who received the sign yet had no right to its promises. Thus, even if the seeds of

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[39] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 30-39.

[40] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 46-47. Cf. Danvers, *A Treatise of Baptism*, 203-207. Cary made slight changes, and skipped some content. Later Cary again copied Danvers without citation. Cf. Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 59-61 and Danvers, *A Treatise of Baptism*, 220-224

[41] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 46.

[42] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 47. Cf. Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 71-72. Elsewhere in his book, Cary quoted Coxe, but this time named him and cited his work. Cf. Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 52,54-56, 208-210 and Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 77-80, 83-84, 152-154.

[43] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 47-49. Cf. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 22-25. Cary copies Hutchinson again, without citation. Cf. Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 61-63, 74-78 and Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 35-39, 68-72.

Abraham were properly sorted into their respective covenants, the "rule of institution" or the "administration" remained the exclusive ground for the application of ordinances.

The third section of Cary's book addressed arguments by Cuthbert Sydenham, William Allen, and Richard Baxter.[44] In this section, Cary repeated arguments previously made concerning the validity of consequences in the context of positive law, as well as the Baptists' response to arguments from Jesus' blessing of the little children, the great commission, and the identity of the Abrahamic covenant. In this section, Cary quoted Hutchinson, without citation, to prove that Deuteronomy 29 was a covenant of works, "though there was grace in it, as there was in all the Covenants that God ever made with men."[45] For Cary, Deuteronomy 29 was the Mosaic old covenant of works. Deuteronomy 30 was the promise of the new covenant of grace.

The fourth section of Cary's book was his most significant contribution to Particular Baptist covenantal literature. In this section he developed the argument that the covenant of circumcision, the covenant made at Sinai, and the covenant made in Moab were three editions of the original covenant of works made in Eden. Though his method was more positive in its construction, he regularly interacted with Obadiah Sedgwick's and Francis Roberts' works.[46]

The covenant of works with Adam was the foundation of this argument. That Genesis 2:16-17 contained the covenant of works, Cary said, "We suppose none will (or can at least Rationally) deny: Forasmuch as Life was Implicitly promised unto our First Parent upon his Obedience, and Death was Explicitely threatned…And upon these terms he was to Stand or Fall; which was plainly and undeniably a Covenant of Works."[47] This statement belongs with those of Blackwood, Hutchinson, and Nehemiah Coxe as an additional example of a common trend in Particular Baptist covenant theology in which the covenant of works was regularly treated as a given, a common ground, a foundation in need of nothing more from their own pens to establish it.[48]

Cary did not spend time proving the covenant of works in Genesis 2:16-17. He simply asserted and assumed it as a foundation upon which he proceeded to prove that the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants operated on the same principles as this original covenant of works. In so doing, Cary appealed to the substance logic of Reformed

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[44] Cuthbert Sydenham. *A Christian Sober and Plain Exercitation on The two grant practical Controversies of these Times; Infant-Baptism and Singing of Psalms* (London: Thomas Mabb, 1657). Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof*, 57-58.

[45] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 105, 120, 173. Cf. Hutchinson, *A Treatise Concerning the Covenant*, 93. Owen and Coxe had made the same point. Cf. Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 151-152; Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 223.

[46] Sedgwick, *The Bowels of Tender Mercy*. Roberts, *Mysterium & Medulla Bibliorum*.

[47] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 121. Cary added on the following page, "It is generally Acknowledged, that [Adam] was then under a Covenant of Works." Cf. also Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 164-165, 172.

[48] For more examples of Particular Baptists teaching the covenant of works, see the final Conclusion.

covenant theology. As in Owen and Coxe, the law and the gospel could be present in a given covenant, materially. The all-important question was whether the covenant was formally established on the one or the other. A covenant formally operating on the basis of obedience was materially or substantially a covenant of works. A covenant formally operating on the basis of faith was materially or substantially a covenant of grace. Cary argued that the Scriptures themselves denominated the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants as covenants of works.

Citing Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 29:5, Romans 10:5, Leviticus 18:5, Galatians 3:10-12, and Hebrews 8, Cary stated that the Mosaic covenant, whether transacted at Sinai or Moab operated fundamentally and materially on the basis of obedience as opposed to faith, "And [was] therefore plainly and undeniably a Covenant of Works."[49] The Israelite covenants were patterned after the Adamic covenant. Commands were given, obedience was required, and curses were threatened. Furthermore, Cary argued that there were only "two General Covenants made with Mankind, in all; that is, the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace." And since "we all affirm there was" a covenant of works in Eden, if Paul called the Sinai covenant a covenant of works in Galatians 4, it had to be one of those two general covenants; it was a later edition of the original covenant of works.[50]

The same was true for the Abrahamic covenant. In this covenant, God promised to be God to Abraham and his natural offspring "upon Condition of Obedience, with an answerable threatning in case of Disobedience."[51] Cary paralleled the threat of banishment from Eden directed to Adam with that of the threat of disinheritance directed to those of Abraham's offspring who did not "keep" the covenant. Circumcision was a gateway obligation because it "indispensably Obliged all that were under it to a Perfect and Universal Obedience to the whole Revealed Will and Law of God."[52] Considering the analogy between Adam's commands and curses, Cary queried, "And if that were a Covenant of Works, why not this?"[53]

To justify his logic, Cary appealed to the Baptists' best friend, Owen, citing Author, work, and page number. This time, however, it was not Owen's commentary on Hebrews that merited Cary's attention but his treatise on justification. Owen said,

> The whole entire Nature of the *Covenant of Works*, consisted in this; *That upon our Personal Obedience, according unto the Law and Rule of it, we should be Accepted with*

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[49] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 121.
[50] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 172.
[51] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 122.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 123.

> *God and Rewarded with him*. Herein the *Essence* of it did consist. And what ever Covenant proceedeth on these terms, or hath the Nature of them in it; however it may be varied with Additions or Alterations, is the same Covenant still, and not another…So whatever Variations may be made in, or Additions unto the Dispensation of the *First Covenant*, so long as this Rule is retained, *Do this and Live*; it is still the same covenant for Substance and Essence of it.[54]

This was Owen's rationale in his doctrine of the subservient Mosaic covenant of works. So long as the covenant operated on works for its blessings, it was a covenant of works. The roots of this logic are as deep as Reformed covenant theology itself. The law and the gospel are opposite in kind, as are the covenants built on them.

Though the covenant of works was renewed after the fall in Cary's thought, its purpose was subservient to the covenant of grace. "But though the Law doth indeed shew us our Necessity of Christ and our Misery without him, yet it doth not *bring us to Christ*…for that is the Work of the Covenant of Faith only."[55]

Some reformed divines, such as Obadiah Sedgwick, argued that the Mosaic covenant was not a covenant of works, but that the Jews perverted it to be such by seeking justification in it. Cary quoted Sedgwick's objection, and replied that although the Jews were wrong to seek justification by that covenant because of its subservient function in pointing sinners to Christ, they were not mistaken in understanding it as a covenant of works.[56] In renewing the covenant of works "did God never intend it as a Means to *give Life and Righteousness*; nor was it able to do so."[57] It required perfect obedience, and offered "a promise of Life thereon…yet it could *give* neither Righteousness nor Life to any in a State of Sin."[58]

To reduce the difference of the old and new covenants to "*Degrees of Manifestation*" of the one covenant of grace could not account for the dogmatic and substantial contrasts employed by the Scriptures relative to those covenants. Cary explained that if Sedgwick's position were granted, "it cannot be imagined…that ever [the Mosaic covenant] would have been set in point blank *Opposition* to [the new covenant], as quite *another thing*, as it is."[59] For Cary it was of great importance to maintain the substantial distinction between

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[54] Owen, *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith Through the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ, Explained, Confirmed, & Vindicated* (London: R. Boulter, 1677), 397.

[55] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 126. To support his argument, Cary cited at length from Owen's explanation of Galatians 3 in his third commentary on Hebrews. Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 231.

[56] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 130-131. Cf. Sedgwick, *The Bowels of Tender Mercy*, 173.

[57] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 132.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 136.

the law and the gospel in the old and new covenants. In a passage that echoed Andrew Ritor, Cary said,

> Accordingly hence hath sprung that *Jumbling* or *Confounding* of Law and Gospel together…The Law is not the Gospel; nor is the Gospel the Law. These two are distinct, and must be kept so…To call therefore the Covenant of Works a Covenant of Faith; or the Legal Covenant deliver'd on Mount *Sinai*, a Covenant of Grace; is no other than to Blend or Confound Law and Gospel together, as if they were the same thing, and no distinction at all to be made betwixt them, only in respect of the different Degrees, or clearness of the Revelation of Gospel Grace.[60]

Cary argued that to fail to distinguish the covenants properly would remove the ability to distinguish between the bondage covenant and the freedom covenant in Galatians 4. If the old covenant were the covenant of freedom, then why should one refuse to go back to it?[61] And in what sense are we free from it? To Cary, Sedgwick's position could not provide a sufficient answer to these questions.

The idea that the Abrahamic covenant was a covenant of works was the standard feature of Particular Baptist covenant theology. The idea that the Mosaic covenant was a covenant of works was a view with roots reaching back into the sixteenth-century Reformed theologians. Thus, Cary's views were not new. But Cary did introduce a novelty to the Baptists' literature on this subject.

Sedgwick argued that a covenant with a Mediator, dedicated by blood, could not be a covenant of works. Cary replied that it was necessary to distinguish between the Ten Commandments given by God directly to the people as a covenant, and a separate "Ceremonial Covenant" that included the statutes and judgments. This second covenant was given by God through Moses and dedicated with the blood of animals.[62] Cary defended his position exegetically from the fact that God did not deliver the Ten Commandments on stone tablets to Moses until after the ceremonial covenant was delivered to the people (cf. Exod. 24:1-12). Thus, if Moses read the covenant to the people in the beginning of Exodus 24, and yet had not received stone tablets from which to read

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[60] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 143. Cf. Ritor, *The Second Part of the Vanity*, 25.

[61] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 144-145. Cary acknowledged that the Baptists grant that believers are under the law as a "*Rule of Life*," but countered that if the law were "*a Covenant of Life*" then we could not be said to be free from it as a covenant of works. He is not using the term "Covenant of Life," as some did, to refer to the covenant of works, but to the covenant of grace or the covenant of faith. This is another example of the Independents' and Baptists' choice to remove the phrase "as such" from SD/2LCF 19.2. They did not limit the giving of the law to Israel to a rule of life.

[62] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 148-149. Cf. Sedgwick, *The Bowels of Tender Mercy*, 174.

until after that event, the Ten Commandments were not a part of the covenant read to the people, the covenant dedicated by the blood of animals.[63]

Cary was not arguing that the Ten Commandments were not a covenant, but that they were a separate covenant from the ceremonial covenant. Notwithstanding, both covenants were covenants of works in Cary's view. Arguing from Hebrews 9 where the covenant dedicated by animal blood is opposed to the new covenant and unable to forgive sins, Cary stated that "it plainly appears, that even the *Ceremonial Covenant* it self, could be no other than *a Covenant of Works*, as well as that written in Stones."[64]

Turning to the arguments of Francis Roberts (1609-1675), Cary stated that his own replies to Sedgwick served to counter most of Roberts' arguments, but Cary wanted to give special attention to two points in Roberts' massive volume.[65] The first was Roberts' claim that in the contrast of Jeremiah 31 between the old and new covenants, "though the *Sinai* Covenant made with *Israel*…is said to be *unlike*, or *not according to the New Covenant*; yet it is not said either by the Prophet or the Apostle, to be *unlike to the Covenant of Faith*."[66] Roberts was arguing that the contrast is not between two kinds of covenants, i.e., a covenant of works and a covenant of faith, but between two phases or administrations of the same covenant, i.e., an old and a new covenant.

Cary considered this to be very selective language. "For is not the New Covenant a Covenant of Faith? And therefore when the *Sinai* Covenant is opposed to the New Covenant; is it not plainly opposed to the Covenant of Faith?"[67] To bolster his argument, Cary granted the premise that both the old and new covenants offer the same substantial blessing, righteousness. But Cary appealed to Romans 10:5-12 to prove that the righteousness of the law and the gospel differ in the terms upon which they are obtained. Cary stated, "If the Difference or Dissimilitude lie in the *terms* of either, and those terms *Essentially* different; Then, though the Promises are the same for the *Substance* of them…it may be justly and properly said, that the one is *not like*, or *not according* to the other: For as *Covenants*, they are *Essentially* different."[68] Thus, though God promised in both covenants to be God to a people, the "terms of Enjoyment" were "*Essentially* different" and thus "so are the Covenants themselves."[69] The final proof of the difference in terms between these covenants was the fact that Jeremiah contrasts them based on the

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[63] Cary affirmed the positive typology of the ceremonial covenant, in portraying Christ's sacrifice and atoning blood, but likewise affirmed the inability of the type to realize the promise of its antitype. Animal blood could not forgive sins. Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 152.

[64] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 150.

[65] On Roberts, see Lim, "The Covenant Theology of Francis Roberts."

[66] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 153. Cf. Roberts, *Mysterium & Medulla Bibliorum*, 769.

[67] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 153.

[68] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 155.

[69] Ibid.

breakability of the old covenant.[70] A covenant that could be broken was not a covenant whose terms were those of faith, but a covenant of works.

The second argument of Roberts dealt with Paul's connection of a promise of life to conditions of obedience in the Sinai covenant. Roberts admitted that to interpret Paul as saying that the Sinai covenant promised life based on obedience was "most Obvious to every one, that reads the Epistles of *Paul* to the *Romans*, and *Galatians*" and he further admitted that this was "in my judgment, of greatest difficulty to be clearly and satisfactorily Answered" by those who considered the Sinai covenant to be the covenant of grace.[71] Roberts reviewed the position of John Ball, who argued that the command of obedience was a consequent condition. The Israelites were not to obey to inherit life, but to obey because they had been given life.[72] This was insufficient for Roberts who said that Ball's position was impossible to reconcile to the fact that New Testament passages speak of the righteousness of the law in contrast to the righteousness of the gospel.

Roberts also reviewed Anthony Burgess' distinction between the law delivered broadly and narrowly. Broadly, the law served the ultimate purpose of pointing the Israelites to find life by faith in Christ. Narrowly, the law commanded obedience for the inheriting of life. Burgess argued that Moses delivered the law in the first sense, but not the second.[73] Roberts disagreed, finding this insufficient because Moses did deliver the law with a promise of life based on obedience.

Roberts' solution to this problem of "greatest difficulty" was to assert that "the Sinai Covenant was purposely so dispensed, as to tender Life and Happiness upon two Opposite, and Contrary Conditions, viz. Works, and Faith; Perfect Doing, and Believing."[74] For Roberts, these two conditions were opposite, but not in competition. Belief was revealed "very sparingly and obscurely" and obedience "very frequently and plainly." Yet, belief was "chiefly and ultimately intended" and obedience "urged upon *Israels* Subordination and tendency to that *Believing*."[75] This view avoided Ball's restriction of the commands of obedience to a consequent condition and it avoided

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[70] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 156.

[71] Ibid. Cf. Roberts, *Mysterium & Medulla Bibliorum*, 772.

[72] Ball, *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*, 133.

[73] Cf. Roberts, *Mysterium & Medulla Bibliorum*, 773-775. Cf. Anthony Burgess, *Vindiciae Legis: Or, A Vindication of the Morall Law and the Covenants, From the Errours of Papists, Arminians, Socinians, and more especially, Antinomians. In XXIX. Lectures, preached at Laurence-Jury, London* (London: James Young, 1646), 223, 230-231, 241-250, 256. On Burgess, see Casselli, *Divine Rule Maintained*.

[74] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 158. Cf. Roberts, *Mysterium & Medulla Bibliorum*, 772. This appears similar to George Walker's "Mixt" covenant of works and grace with its opposite conditions. Cf. Walker, *The Manifold Wisedome of God*, 133.

[75] Cf. Roberts, *Mysterium & Medulla Bibliorum*, 775.

Burgess' denial that Moses delivered the law with a promise of life based on obedience. However, it opened itself up to direct critique from Cary.

The law and gospel were contrary substances upon which contrary covenants were constructed. While the law and gospel could be present in a given covenant, that covenant could only offer a blessing based on the one or the other. Cary attacked on this very front, clarifying that "two Opposite Covenants may be allowed to be purposely so dispensed, as to tender Life and Happiness upon two Opposite and Contrary Conditions, *Works* and *Faith*; yet it is utterly impossible that the same Covenant should be so dispensed."[76] Citing Paul's words in Romans 11:6, Cary argued that works and grace are mutually exclusive and cannot stand together as conditions in the same covenant. Thus, "Either the *Sinai* Covenant therefore is a Covenant of Grace, or it is a Covenant of Works."[77] Given that Roberts defended and legitimized the presence of the condition of works relative to a promise of life in the Mosaic covenant, and did so against Ball and Burgess, Cary had found a significant weakness in the armor of the paedobaptists' defenses. The substance logic of Reformed covenant theology, based on Biblical exegesis, disallowed Roberts' position. And Cary pressed for a resolution to the contradiction.[78]

Cary's covenantal model meant that Old Testament believers were under two opposite covenants at the same time. In his confusing manner of citing some quotations and failing to do so in other instances, Cary selectively copied a portion of Owen's third commentary on Hebrews, without citation,

> We must grant, that God's People were then under *two distinct* or *essentially different Covenants*: We say, we must do so; provided always, that the way of *Reconciliation, and Salvation* was the same under both…For no Reconciliation with God, nor Salvation, could ever be obtained *by vertue of the Old Covenant*…though all Believers were Reconciled, Justified and Saved, by vertue of the *Promise*, whilst they were *under that Covenant*.[79]

Old Testament saints were saved under the old covenant, but not by the old covenant.

The fourth section ended with a summary of the twenty-three arguments Cary used to prove that the Mosaic covenant was a new edition of the original covenant of works. This summary is helpful because throughout the fourth section the arguments were

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[76] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 159.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Cary agreed that the law was subservient unto the gospel and that it never competed with the gospel in terms of justifying sinners. But he argued that this did not make the law a covenant of grace. Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 166-167. "A subserviency in any thing to promote the Ends of something else, doth not make it to be the thing it self."

[79] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 176. Cf. Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 228-229.

developed in response to passages in Sedgwick, Roberts, and others. They were not stated clearly and positively until this summary.[80] The Abrahamic covenant played a minor role in this section, partly because it would receive more treatment in the fifth, and perhaps partly because Nehemiah Coxe had given it so much attention.

In the fifth and final section of *A Solemn Call*, Cary set out to describe the covenant of grace made with Abraham and to conclude with a description of the differences between the two covenants. Cary's exposition of the covenant of grace made with Abraham was a clear appropriation of Coxe's argument. Cary asserted that Genesis 12 was the covenant of grace and that it was distinct from the covenant of circumcision in Genesis 17 which required obedience and threatened disinheritance for those who broke the covenant.[81] Here Cary's comments dialogued with his old foe, Dr. Burthogge. Cary's overall argument was that Burthogge's model failed to distinguish between the two covenants made with Abraham and the seeds and promises belonging to each of those covenants.[82]

The conditionality of the covenants played an important role in Cary's argumentation. Cary contended that a comparison of Genesis 12 and 17 yielded two opposite covenants based on the fact that the former was an absolute promise, and the latter was dependent on obedience. Cary used this comparison to sort various passages of Scripture, affirming that Genesis 3 and 12, Deuteronomy 30, Jeremiah 31, and more, were absolute promises of salvation and thus properly identified as the covenant of grace. But Genesis 17, Exodus 24, and Deuteronomy 29 "were but several Repetitions of the Covenant of Works made with our First Parent; and therefore called *the Old, or the First Covenant*."[83] Faith was a necessary part "in order to the receiving, and consequently in order to our participation" in the covenant of grace, Cary stated, but it was a "fruit" of the promise rather than an "antecedent" to the promise.[84]

If Cary's arguments were acknowledged, then the conclusion had to be accepted that the covenants from which infant baptism were argued "are now Repealed" and thus there is not "any Room left for any other or further Argument from either of those forementioned Covenants, to Infer the Baptism of Infants."[85] John Flavel, Cary's neighbor

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[80] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 183-187.

[81] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 188-192.

[82] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 192-217. In this section, Cary quoted Coxe in support of his arguments, citing his source.

[83] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 232. Notice the way that Cary uses the term "old covenant" collectively based on this argumentation.

[84] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 230-231. Cary quoted various passages from Owen's third commentary on Hebrews to support his point. Cf. Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 15, 223-224, 290.

[85] Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 232.

in Dartmouth, disagreed and published a response that same year.[86] Cary replied to Flavel the same year, as well, and Flavel returned the favor once more the following year. The exchange, as was so common, was little more than a repetition of their arguments back and forth at each other.

Flavel's reply returned to Cary the very arguments that Cary had rejected. Flavel criticized Cary's lack of distinction between the intention of God in giving the law, and the perversion of the Jews who sought to be justified by it.[87] He also argued that circumcision was not a seal to Abraham alone, nor did it, in itself, bind its bearers to a full obedience to the law.[88]

One of Flavel's primary contentions with Cary's book was on the subject of conditionality.[89] Cary had emphasized strongly the method of sorting the covenants of Scripture into the covenant of works or grace based on their absolute or conditional nature. Flavel spilled considerable ink explaining that the covenant of grace is in fact conditional, though its condition is not meritorious. If both covenants were conditional, Cary could not so easily sort the Mosaic covenant in to the category of the covenant of works. In Cary's response to Flavel, he repeated that faith was a "Necessary Means in order to the *Receiving*" of the blessing of the covenant of grace, while also qualifying that faith "must be wrought in us by the Grace of the Covenant." But he refused to call faith a condition because a condition "plainly implies something of Merit."[90] This section of the debate became entirely semantic.

Another of Flavel's primary concerns was that it was impossible that the covenant of works and the covenant of grace should ever run side by side. Flavel strongly attacked Cary on this point.[91] And although Cary had clearly declared the subservience of the Mosaic covenant of works, Flavel would not accept any model that posited that the covenants of works and grace were simultaneous. Flavel charged Cary with a "pure and perfect contradiction," but made no comment as to the fact that Cary was simply reproducing Owen's thought on this point.[92]

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[86] Flavel, *Vindiciæ Legis*. On the interaction between Cary and Flavel, see Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 725-741. Flavel's title page outlined Cary's view, and Stephen Casselli mistakenly attributed Cary's view to Flavel as a result. Cf. Casselli, *Divine Rule Maintained*, 92. "John Flavel revealed his position with the subtitle of his treatise on the law. He wrote in order to prove that 'the Law at *Sinai*, and the Covenant of Circumcision with *Abraham*, were the very same with *Adam's* Covenant of Works.'" Flavel's title page was actually advertising that he opposed Cary's view.

[87] Flavel, *Vindiciæ Legis*, iii-iv. Cary dealt with this in *A Solemn Call*, 130-131. See above.

[88] Flavel, *Vindiciæ Legis*, vi-viii.

[89] Flavel, *Vindiciæ Legis*, 59-81.

[90] Cary, *A Just Reply to Mr. John Flavell's Arguments* (London: J[ohn] Harris, 1690), 34.

[91] Flavel, *Vindiciæ Legis*, 10-23.

[92] Flavel, *Vindiciæ Legis*, 13.

Flavel demanded to know "What Orthodox Divines…with their Books and Pages" taught that the condition of obedience unto life remained active after the fall.[93] Anticipating that Cary would appeal to Francis Roberts, Flavel stated that Cary abused Roberts because Roberts affirmed that "believing in Christ was ultimately and chiefly intended in the *Sinai* Covenant; and perfect doing was only urged upon *Israel* in subordination and tendency to that believing."[94]

The entire issue came down to subordination as opposed to coordination. But though Flavel acknowledged that Cary assigned a subordinate role to the Mosaic covenant of works, he insisted that Cary was actually making the covenant of works coordinate to the covenant of grace.[95] Both Cary and Roberts taught that the conditions of obtaining life based on believing and doing were temporally coordinate in the Mosaic covenant, and both taught that the condition of obedience unto life was subordinate to the condition of belief unto life. However, Flavel would not permit Cary's view. As Cary had argued, on the one hand opposite conditions could not be present in the same covenant, and on the other hand the Mosaic covenant of works had a different purpose than the original covenant of works.[96]

Flavel was selective in his appeal to the Reformed tradition. He quoted Samuel Bolton to the effect that the law was not a covenant of works.[97] But he did not mention that Bolton (following John Cameron) denied that the Mosaic covenant was the covenant of grace because it was a subservient covenant based on obedience, though not identical with the original covenant of works. As a clone of Cameron, Bolton's position was certainly not an ally for Flavel in presenting a united front against the Baptists on this point. Two pages later, Flavel noted that Cameron made the Mosaic covenant a subservient covenant, but made no connection between Bolton and Cameron. The most glaring inconsistency in Flavel's critique of Cary based on the Reformed tradition, however, was his insistence that Cary was alone and novel in his assertion that Old Testament believers were under two covenants at the same time. Flavel did not address Owen's position on this point.[98]

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[93] Flavel, *Planelogia*, 185.

[94] Flavel, *Planelogia*, 186.

[95] Flavel, *Vindiciæ Legis*, 23.

[96] Benjamin Keach defended Cary by saying, "*Adam's* Covenant, I grant, had one end and design, and the *Sinai* Covenant of Works had another; yet, may be, both, as to the Essence and Substance of them but one and the same Covenant: Which, doubtless, is all Mr. *Cary* intends." Benjamin Keach, *The Ax laid to the Root II*, 15.

[97] Cf. Flavel, *Planelogia*, 183.

[98] Nor did Flavel acknowledge that Cary's model of the Mosaic covenant as a new edition of the covenant of works matched the language of Owen who said that "Besides [the covenant of works and the covenant of grace]…there is mention in the Scripture of sundry particular intervening Covenants that God made with his Church, or single persons, at several seasons." These other covenants, however, were

Throughout the exchange, there are signs of frustration for the two authors. Flavel was clearly the more erudite and concise writer, but he used this to chide both Cary's positions and his style. Flavel's selective appeal to tradition was also designed to marginalize his opponent, implying a substantial difference between Cary's views and those of Flavel's carefully crafted tradition.[99] Cary did not take this well and his reply to Flavel was more or less a louder presentation of his previous publication.

Cary's works represent a shift in Particular Baptist covenant theology. Most Particular Baptist authors to this point had emphasized the typical and earthly character of the Israelite covenants as a method of distinguishing them from the covenant of grace, substantially. Cary aimed at the same target, but argued for the substantial difference between the old and new covenants based on a substantial identity between the old covenant and the covenant of works. Cary's views are stated more strongly than some Particular Baptists who spoke of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants as covenants of works for life in the land of Canaan. Cary, like others, was clear that the promise of life in the Mosaic covenant was unattainable and subordinate to the gospel, and he was clear as to the typical nature of the old covenant, but he aligned the old covenant with the covenant of works more closely than previous writers.

As argued to this point, especially in chapters one and five, one of the major ways in which Reformed theology diversified itself was in addressing the presence of the law and the gospel in the Old Testament in general, and in the Mosaic covenant in particular. John Cameron's subservient covenant avoided many of these questions by positing that the Mosaic covenant was neither the covenant of works nor the covenant of grace. Some of the Particular Baptists' views followed this kind of model, but by asserting an identity

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"emanations from and particular expressions or limitations of one or other of the two solemn Covenants." Petto, *The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant*, vi-vii.

[99] Mark Jones and Ted Van Raalte draw similar conclusions. Flavel stated that if the Particular Baptists were correct about the Abrahamic covenant as a covenant of works, their position indicated that Old Testament believers "were all saved in a different way from that in which Believers are now saved." Flavel's point was that, from his perspective, since the Abrahamic covenant was the covenant of grace by which the Old Testament saints were saved, then if that covenant were a covenant of works, believers in Israel were saved by some other unknown covenant, and in a way discontinuous with New Testament believers who were saved by Abraham's covenant. Jones and Van Raalte built on this and stated that the Particular Baptist position is "one step closer to what would later be affirmed in dispensationalist circles—that the Old Testament saints were saved in a different way from the New Testament saints." This is an untenable extrapolation given that the Particular Baptists consistently and clearly affirmed that the elect in all ages were saved by the covenant grace. And however much they assigned a works-identity to the Israelite covenants, those covenants were always subordinate to the covenant of grace. Salvation was never to be sought or obtained in any way other than the way affirmed by all orthodox Protestant Reformed Puritan Christians. To draw a line from the seventeenth-century Particular Baptists' covenant theology to nineteenth-century dispensationalism, which did not arise from Baptist roots, is historically unconvincing. Cf. Flavel, *Planelogia*, 177; Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 740.

between the covenant in Eden with that in Sinai, Cary was entering the territory of debates with decades of history, especially in the English Reformed community. Hercules Collins and Benjamin Keach followed Cary in this manner of expression, meaning that the last decade of the major period of Particular Baptist publication on covenant theology is heavily weighted in the direction that Cary pointed.

Cary's *A Solemn Call* also deserves special attention because, as Cary and his prefacers said, his work did indeed sum up and present much of the debate.[100] Many Particular Baptist authors prior to this point narrowed their focus or wrote short works. After 50 years of debate, Cary was poised to summarize and present a large portion of what came before him. As a result, one could promote his book, or read it, as one that dealt with the subject in a more comprehensive manner than any other Particular Baptist work to that point.

Despite the usefulness of Cary's book as a compendium of sorts, the end result was tedious, and its constant style of raising objections and answering them obscured the positive arguments Cary was crafting. His book would have been helpful for those already familiar with the debate, but not for those wishing to be introduced to it. Additionally, Cary's overstatements and lack of nuance on conditionality were unhelpful. Furthermore, though Keach followed Cary in describing the Israelite covenants as editions of the original covenant of works, the merits of this shift for the Particular Baptist system as a whole are questionable, as stated above. Nevertheless, Cary stands in substantial continuity with the Particular Baptist tradition upon whose shoulders he stood. The Abrahamic covenant was not the covenant of grace, and therefore infant baptism could not be legitimized.

Hercules Collins

Hercules Collins (1647–4 October, 1702) was a Particular Baptist pastor and author.[101] He succeeded John Norcott (1621–24 March, 1676) as the pastor of the church originally

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[100] At the end of his *A Just Reply*, Cary took time to respond to Joseph Whiston's reply to Nehemiah Coxe, *The Right Method For the proving of Infant-Baptism. With some Reflections On some late Tracts against Infant-Baptism* (London: Jonathan Robinson, 1690). Here again, Cary simply repeated his previous arguments. Cf. Cary, *A Just Reply*, 129-184. John Flavel said that Whiston had "accurately and successfully defended God's Covenant with *Abraham*, against Mr. Cox." Flavel, *Planelogia*, 277.

[101] On Collins, see Weaver, *Hercules Collins*; Haykin, 'Collins, Hercules (*d.* 1702)', *ODNB*. See also, LMA DL/C/B/030/MS09174/028/024, Probate Inventory of Hercules Collins, 24 Oct, 1702. Collins had a 60-year lease on a house on Old Gravel Lane in Wapping, Stepney. Among other possessions, Collins owned "300 of books of which is 50 large ones ye rest All small." These, with other items, were valued at sixteen pounds and ten shillings. Comparatively, Nehemiah Coxe's books were valued at 40 pounds. The inventory includes a complete list of Collins' apparel, in which he owned "5 pair of divinity drawers" and "4 divinity waistcoats" and "2 short old wigs." In Collins' probate inventory, his administratrix was named Mary

begun by John Spilsbury.[102] Denied access to the universities, Collins was forced to educate himself, and made a living as a tailor. Collins worked hard, however, to provide the best education possible for men in his church who showed signs of giftedness for ministerial office. The Church Book of Collins' congregation records expenses for purchasing basic starter libraries for men in the church.[103] And Collins himself published a treatise emphasizing the importance of ordaining equipped and qualified men.[104]

Collins' writings on covenant theology were not large treatises dedicated to the subject itself. Covenant theology played an important, though minor, role in his works.[105] Nor did Collins introduce new arguments or pull Particular Baptist covenant theology in any one direction. His works serve primarily to illustrate continuity and diversity within the tradition. As to continuity, Collins approved Cary's work and employed Coxe's language relative to the Abrahamic covenant, calling it the covenant of peculiarity. As to diversity, Collins is an example of one who clearly held to the covenant of redemption.

Collins' earliest views on the covenants are gleaned from *An Orthodox Catechism*, a "baptized" version of the Heidelberg Catechism.[106] In a series of questions dealing with the sacraments, Collins taught that only those who "Actually profess Repentance towards God, Faith in, and Obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ" were the proper subjects of baptism.[107] The next question raised the issue of infant baptism: "Are no Infants to be baptized?" Collins initial reply was that there was no command to do so, thus it was unlawful.

A subsequent question raised the covenantal argument for infant baptism. Collins first replied that if infants are said to be in the covenant, they must be so absolutely or conditionally. If children are in it absolutely, then they must all be saved. If children are in it conditionally, meaning that at a ripe age they must believe for themselves in order

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Paxton. Her identity is unknown, though she may have been his sister. Cf. LMA DL/C/B/010/MS09172/110 folio 63, Will of Mary Paxton, Proved 8 Feb, 1716. This Mary Paxton also lived in Wapping, Stepney and bequeathed a ring that had belonged to her "brother Collins." See also, TNA PROB 11/434/314, Will of Humphrey Hutchins, Proved 14 Oct, 1696. Hutchins represented the Wapping church alongside of Collins in the 1689 general assembly. He left Collins five pounds.

[102] Benjamin Keach preached Norcott's funeral sermon, and identified his death date in Keach, *An Elegy on the Death of that most Laborious and Painful Minister of the Gospel Mr. John Norcot* (London: Ben[jamin] Harris, 1676).

[103] These are pictured and transcribed in Weaver, *Hercules Collins*, 204-207.

[104] Hercules Collins, *The Temple Repair'd: Or, An Essay to revive the long-neglected Ordinances, of exercising the spiritual Gift of Prophecy for the Edification of the Churches; and of ordaining Ministers duly qualified* (London: William and Joseph Marshall, 1702).

[105] Weaver offers a brief treatment of Collins' covenant theology in Weaver, *Hercules Collins*, 159-163.

[106] Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism: Being the Sum of Christian Religion, Contained in the Law and Gospel* (London: n.p., 1680).

[107] Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 26. Collins was copying from 2LCF 29.2.

to receive its benefits, then "what real spiritual priviledg [do] the Infant-Seed of Believers, as such, have more than the Infant Seed of Unbelievers, if they live also to years of maturity, and by true Faith and Love take hold of God's Covenant?"[108]

Collins' second reply was to distinguish "two parts" in the Abrahamic covenant, a spiritual part to Abraham and his spiritual seed, and a temporal promise of life in Canaan for Abraham's natural seed. As Weaver notes, this was similar to the way that John Spilsbury, Collins' pastoral predecessor by two generations, had spoken of the Abrahamic covenant.[109] *An Orthodox Catechism* clearly sorted the promises and seeds of Abraham, but it was not until years later that Collins followed Nehemiah Coxe and the majority of the Particular Baptist tradition in speaking not just of a twofold dimension to Abraham's covenant, but two separate covenants transacted with Abraham.

In 1691, Collins wrote a book in defense of credobaptism, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven*. This book, like the catechism, appealed to covenant theology only in minor ways. The greater emphasis on the book was on the lack of a scriptural command for infant baptism. In response to the paedobaptists' covenantal justification of infant baptism, Collins recycled, twice, his argument from the catechism that one is in covenant absolutely or conditionally.[110] Infants could not be said to be in the covenant in either way. If absolute, all children of believers are saved. If conditional, actual repentance and faith had to be attributed to the children. Rather than developing a covenantal argument regarding the identity of the Abrahamic or Mosaic covenants, Collins referred his reader "to Mr. *Cary's Solemn Call*, which clears up the Covenant made with *Israel* at *Mount Sinai*…and that in the Land of *Moab*…as also the Covenant of Circumcision made with *Abraham*…[which] are plainly proved to be three several Editions of the Covenant of Works."[111] Collins felt no need to reinvent the Baptist wheel.

Four years later, however, Collins expressed himself more fully in the area of covenant theology in *The Sandy Foundation of Infant Baptism Shaken*.[112] The passage in view was Acts 2:38-39 and the promise announced by Peter. Collins appealed to John Owen's third volume on Hebrews, like Coxe and Cary, quoting the passages in which Owen limited the making of the covenant of grace to the elect alone.[113] The promise, therefore, being restricted to the elect, could not justify infant baptism. But Collins' main arguments were aimed at the Abrahamic covenant.

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[108] Collins, *An Orthodox Catechism*, 28.

[109] Weaver, *Hercules Collins*, 161-162.

[110] Collins, *Believers-Baptism from Heaven, and of Divine Institution. Infants Baptism from Earth, and Human Invention. Proved from the Commission of Christ, the great Law-giver to the Gospel-church (*London: J. Hancock, 1691), 29-31, 138-139.

[111] Collins, *Believers Baptism from Heaven*, 126.

[112] Collins, *The Sandy Foundation of Infant Baptism Shaken* (London: n.p., 1695).

[113] Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 256, 291.

The promise in Acts 2 could not refer to the Abrahamic covenant because in that covenant, the promises ran throughout generations. Nehemiah Coxe had emphasized this point, namely that federal headship is immediate—it reaches to all those represented by the federal head.[114] Collins was arguing that if Peter was repeating the covenant of circumcision in Acts 2, he was stating that the promise was for the parents, the children, and all subsequent generations, which was not the case.[115]

The promise could not be the Abrahamic covenant because that was "shadowy and typical" and "The Substance being come, the shadow flies away."[116] These typical promises were offered based on obedience to the Abrahamic covenant, "and upon a willful Neglect of Circumcision, they were to be cut off from the people."[117] A typical breakable covenant could not be the covenant of grace.

Collins then modified, or clarified, his view of the duality of God's dealings with Abraham. He said "As *Abraham* was a twofold Head, so God made with him a twofold covenant."[118] Collins sorted the promises and seeds he had distinguished in his previous works into two covenants "of a differing Nature…the peculiar Covenant with Abraham and his Natural seed" and "a Covenant and Promise of Grace."[119]

Collins defined the covenant of grace as "God's Promise of Justification, Sanctification and Glorification, unto all the Elect, upon the Account of Redemption and Sanctification by Christ, in his Death and State of Humiliation."[120] In contrast to this, the covenant of circumcision "obligeth to keep the whole Law, *Ergo*, the Covenant of Circumcision is not the Covenant of Grace."[121] A covenant of earthly blessings that disinherited its covenanters for disobedience was not God's promise of justification in Christ.

Another area in which Collins made his argument was the meaning of being in covenant. The paedobaptists often argued that it was possible to be in the covenant internally or externally. Baptism was the way to covenant externally. Collins replied that "this is to be in the House and out of the House at the same time."[122] It was simply a

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[114] Cf. Coxe, *A Discourse of the Covenants*, 61, 118.

[115] Collins, *The Sandy Foundation*, 7.

[116] Collins, *The Sandy Foundation*, 8.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Collins, *The Sandy Foundation*, 9. Collins quickly qualified that though the covenant of circumcision was not the covenant of grace, he did not "deny there was any Grace or Favour in this Transaction with *Abraham*." And he added, "I am inclined to believe, the very Covenant of Works was not without Favour and Grace in some sense." This is another example of the covenant of works mentioned in passing, without argumentation or debate. Collins also called the Abrahamic covenant the "Covenant of Peculiarity." This likely indicates the influence of Nehemiah Coxe. Collins, *The Sandy Foundation*, 11.

[120] Collins, *The Sandy Foundation*, 9.

[121] Collins, *The Sandy Foundation*, 11.

[122] Collins, *The Sandy Foundation*, 10.

contradiction. The Scriptures, Collins contended, contained nothing regarding being "outwardly and inwardly in the Covenant of Grace." He continued,

> If we ask what they mean by Infants of Believers being in the Covenant of Grace? They answer, they are in the External part of the covenant; if you ask, what is that? They say, the Administration of the Covenant; if you ask, what is that? They will tell you it is Baptism; so that the whole amounts to no more than this, such children they ought to be baptized, because they ought to be baptized.[123]

Having already appealed to Owen earlier regarding those with whom the covenant is really made, and having defined the covenant of grace in a way that limited its subjects to the elect, Collins was pressing the issue of what it actually meant to bring one's child into the external administration of the covenant.[124] He argued that the Baptists agreed that the children of believers enjoy many benefits because of the faith of their parents, but that this did not entitle them to baptism.[125]

Expecting a counter-argument regarding the identity of apostates, Collins replied that "Persons may profess to be in Christ, and in the Covenant of Grace, but this is barely a Profession of what they never had, for they never were in the Covenant of Grace really; but our Brethren say, their Children are indeed in the Covenant of Grace."[126] It was one thing to say that someone professed, falsely, to be in the covenant and their falsehood was discovered later. It was another thing to say that someone was in the covenant, entirely apart from any profession.

Collins concluded his polemic with 15 arguments presented in short syllogisms to prove that God had made a covenant of works with Israel after the fall. These arguments resemble closely, but are not identical to, Cary's summary of his twenty-three arguments to prove the Israelite covenants were covenants of works and not the covenant of grace.[127]

The remainder of *The Sandy Foundation* was spent reviewing and replying to Frances Mence's book, *Vindiciæ Fœderis* and Michael Harrison's book *Infant Baptism God's*

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[123] Ibid.

[124] Here, again, Collins argued that one is in covenant absolutely or conditionally, as he had in his previous works.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Collins, *The Sandy Foundation*, 11.

[127] Collins, *The Sandy Foundation*, 13-14. Cf. Cary, *A Solemn Call*, 183-187.

Ordinance.[128] Collins' replies repeated the foundation he had developed earlier in the book. He completed his work with ten syllogistic arguments for credobaptism.[129]

There is another source, written by Collins, that contributes an important piece to a well-rounded view of his covenantal thinking. Collins penned a long poem entitled *The Marrow of Gospel-History* in 1696, in which he utilized the motif of covenant several times. The first of these uses is the most important. Collins wrote,

> Counsels of Love, in Heaven above,
> With Father, Son, and Spirit.
> Counsels of Peace, how to release,
> Man from his sad Demerit.
> In this Compact, Eternal Act,
> It was concluded on,
> That Man should be the Subject free
> of God's Redemption.
>
> In this Contract, and noble Act,
> The Price was fixt upon.
> Justice demands no Gold or Lands,
> But Godlike Blood for Man.
> A Covenant of Suretiship
> Christ entered into,
> That unto Death would give his Life,
> And unto God his due.[130]
>
> The Mountains fast, they all shall haste
> From their most fixed Place,
> Before that he will thee deny,
> Who art in Cov'nant-Grace.
> If any can the Heavens span,
> And measure Sea and Land;

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[128] Francis Mence, *Vindiciæ Fœderis: Or A Vindication of the Interest that the Children of Believers, as such, have in the Covenant of Grace, with their Parents; under the Gospel Dispensation* (London: Printed for the author, 1694). Mence was a Congregationalist minister and a fellow resident of Wapping. Michael Harrison, *Infant Baptism God's Ordinance* (London: Thom. Cockerill, 1694).

[129] Collins, *The Sandy Foundation*, 30-32. These arguments were originally presented in Collins, *The Antidote Proved A Counterfeit: Or, Error Detected, and Believers Baptism Vindicated* (London: William Marshall, 1693), 17-20.

[130] Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History* (London: printed for the author, 1696), 17.

Then Flesh and Sin, and Satan's Gin,
May pluck them from his Hand.[131]

The Substance of the Covenant
Of Grace, it is in short;
Thy God I am, thou shalt be mine,
And we will never part.
Now God and Man together dwell
In Christ, for evermore:
This is the great Foundation of
Man's Happiness in store.[132]

But those are Christ's, all things are theirs,
And work still for their Good;
But the Profane, what e're they have,
It's separate from God;
From God in way of Covenant,
So that all these may say,
Riches and Honour I have much,
But God in all leaves me.[133]

Of significance in these verses is Collins' clear appeal to a covenant of redemption. Nehemiah Coxe and the Second London Baptist Confession espoused a covenant of redemption, but it did not play a prominent role in Particular Baptist literature. Consequently, Collins' use of it here is of note, especially in light of the next author in consideration, Benjamin Keach, who denied its exegetical legitimacy.

Hercules Collins was not a pioneer or an innovator in Particular Baptist covenant theology, but his work demonstrates an economy of effort and a self-conscious perpetuation of the Particular Baptist model. Collins wrote no more than he needed to, appealing to other writers as it was convenient. And he appropriated the models and language of his present and past brethren, especially Nehemiah Coxe and Philip Cary. But when called to the task, whether in polemical prose or poetical praises, Hercules

[131] Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 86.
[132] Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 94.
[133] Collins, *The Marrow of Gospel-History*, 95.

Collins ably articulated and defended the Particular Baptists' credobaptism and covenant theology in his own words and in his own ways.[134]

Benjamin Keach

Benjamin Keach (29 February, 1640–July 18, 1704) was a prominent figure among the second generation of Particular Baptists.[135] Keach grew up in Buckinghamshire, and took up his first pastorate there, but settled in London in 1668. His Baptist loyalties began at an early age, though he initially associated with the General Baptists. Around 1672, Keach converted to the Particular Baptist persuasion and gathered a church in Horsleydown, Southwark, where he lived on Freeman's Lane until his death.

Keach's authorial output surpassed all other Particular Baptists of his day, by far.[136] As a result, scholars have given him significantly greater attention than most other Particular Baptists of the seventeenth century.[137] Much of this literature focuses on Keach's role in the hymn-singing controversy, though Keach's covenant theology has received ample attention as well. David Bowman Riker dedicated an entire dissertation to Keach's federal theology, Jonathan Arnold assigned a chapter of his dissertation to the subject, and Thomas Hicks Jr. wrote a dissertation contrasting Keach's and Baxter's doctrines of justification, including their covenantal thought as it was pertinent to those points.[138] The disproportion of secondary literature dedicated to Keach as opposed to other Particular Baptists has brought with it defects and imbalances in evaluations of Keach's covenant theology.

Riker's treatment of Benjamin Keach's covenant theology portrays Keach as a pioneer. Yet this portrayal pays almost no attention to the substantial Particular Baptist tradition that preceded Keach. Riker's work and bibliography do not include Keach's contemporaries Nehemiah Coxe, Thomas Delaune, Philip Cary, or Hercules Collins, or

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[134] Collins provides another example of the caution that must be exercised when gauging the views of such theologians. The covenant of works and the covenant of redemption receive passing and sparse mention from Collins, yet without the slightest hint of reservation.

[135] LMA DW/PA/05/1706/057 Will of Benjamin Keach, Proved 7 February, 1706. On Keach, see Beth Lynch, 'Keach, Benjamin (1640–1704)', *ODNB*.

[136] Keach published around 45 works, covering numerous genres and subjects.

[137] For recent summaries and evaluations of the secondary literature on Keach, see Arnold, *Benjamin Keach*, 8-11 and Jae Ho Lee, "A Golden Mine Opened: The Doctrinal Rubric of the Perseverance of the Saints in the Thought of Benjamin Keach (1640-1704)" (PhD Dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 2-8.

[138] Riker, *A Catholic Reformed Theologian*; Arnold, *Benjamin Keach*, 121-159; and Thomas Hicks, Jr., "An Analysis of the Doctrine of Justification in the Theologies of Richard Baxter and Benjamin Keach" (PhD Dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 158-167. Cf. also Lee, "A Golden Mine Opened," 70-79.

Keach's predecessors such as John Spilsbury, Christopher Blackwood, Thomas Patient, or Edward Hutchinson.

In one sense, this lack of heritage is understandable because Riker focused on Keach's occasions, sources, and context, namely the antinomian and Baxterian controversies. Riker rightly contextualized Keach's writings based on comparison and interaction with his opponents. However, to explain Keach's covenant theology positively, Riker used paedobaptist sources with whom he saw Keach agreeing. This, paired with a glaring lack of Particular Baptist sources to do the same, brings problematic results.

For example, to explain Keach's argument that all the elect were saved by the same covenant in all of redemptive history, Riker appealed to a passage from Owen's commentary on Hebrews 8.[139] The passage cited is Owen's rehearsal of the common paedobaptist covenantal paradigm of one covenant of grace under two administrations. The problem is that Owen recited this view precisely to reject it. Riker thus not only misread Owen, but also wrongly associated Keach with that misreading and interpreted his covenant theology through it. Riker failed to notice, in this case, that while the Particular Baptists agreed that the covenant of grace was the singular and immutable source of salvation for all the elect in all ages, they also argued that the old covenant was not an older form, or administration, of the covenant of grace. Considering the importance of this point in the Particular Baptists' polemic, the consequences of such a mistake are potentially systemic.

Elsewhere, Riker correctly followed Keach's argument that the Abrahamic covenant was not the covenant of grace.[140] This argument, of course, had a long heritage and tradition in Particular Baptist literature, but Riker does not appeal to that tradition or even demonstrate an awareness of it. The result is that Riker's work is not a consistently safe guide to Particular Baptist covenant theology in general, or Keach's in particular. It is too narrowly contextualized to see the Baptist roots of Keach's thought and the ways in which he was simply repeating those who had gone before him.[141]

Jonathan Arnold's work is considerably improved in these areas, reviewing with great brevity the views of Henry Jessey, Christopher Blackwood, Hercules Collins, and Nehemiah Coxe before discussing Keach.[142] Nevertheless, even Arnold failed to give due

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[139] Riker, *A Catholic Reformed Theologian*, 96. Owen's arguments on this point were covered in detail in chapter 5. Cf. Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition*, 225.

[140] Riker, *A Catholic Reformed Theologian*, 134-146.

[141] In a case such as Thomas Hick's dissertation where the focus is intentionally narrowed to a comparison between Baxter's and Keach's covenantal models, not to appeal to other Baptists is permissible. But in a dissertation like Riker's that is dedicated to rightly understanding Keach's covenant theology as a whole, the lack of Baptist context is a weakness.

[142] Arnold, *Benjamin Keach*, 132-136. Arnold notes that Riker "fails to place Keach's covenant theology in its Particular Baptist context." Arnold, *Benjamin Keach*, 121.

weight to the tradition that preceded Keach. In introducing Keach's covenant theology, Arnold stated that "the already-extant discussion of covenants within Particular Baptist circles could hardly be considered a fully mature covenant theology, and definitely not a wholly federal scheme."[143] Arnold portrays Keach as one who "helped push the Particular Baptist community to accept a full-fledged federalist theology" and "the first Particular Baptist to present what could be considered a detailed federalist theology."[144]

Arnold is operating under specific definitions, distinguishing between covenant theology, or a theological system in which the covenants play an important role, and federalism, a subset of covenant theology in which system one figure stands for a group of people in a covenant.[145] This distinction is helpful in the context of Keach's covenantal thought because Richard Baxter developed a covenant theology that denied the imputation of Adam's sin to all mankind in the covenant of works and the imputation of Christ's obedience to the elect in the covenant of grace. Baxter had a covenant theology intentionally devoid of federalism.

However, if the distinction of federalism from the broader category of covenant theology is what Arnold has in mind when saying that Keach helped to "push the Particular Baptist community to accept a full-fledged federalist theology," then this claim is untenable. The fact is that Keach stands at the end of, and on top of, a large stream of Baptist covenantal, and federal, thought. And though Keach diversified the Baptist tradition in his arguments about the covenant of grace and the covenant of redemption, Keach's contributions to the Particular Baptists' covenant theology represent neither a "push" towards, nor an "acceptance" of an Adam-Christ federalism. These points were well established. And Keach defended, but did not define, Particular Baptist federalism in these areas.

There are two underlying weaknesses in these overestimations of the importance of Keach in Particular Baptist federalism. The first, already demonstrated, is the general lack of awareness of the Baptists' covenantal tradition. The second, argued throughout this work, is the importance of recognizing both the Puritan provenance and the polemical nature of the Particular Baptists' writings. Because the Particular Baptists shared a great deal of theological heritage and doctrine with the Protestant Reformed Puritan community, evidenced above all by their confessions of faith, they tended to write only on subjects where they disagreed with their paedobaptist peers. Thus, if the Particular Baptists did not set out to pen full-orbed expositions of covenant theology, it was not because they did not possess sufficient views but because on many, if not most, points they saw no need. The quantity of Keach's writings, therefore, does not represent a move

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[143] Arnold, *Benjamin Keach*, 137.

[144] Arnold, *Benjamin Keach*, 138, 249.

[145] Arnold, *Benjamin Keach*, 121-125.

toward acceptance of a federal system. His authorial output represents a Particular Baptist who wrote after the Glorious Revolution and had the freedom to publish at will.[146]

To be sure, Keach is an important figure in Particular Baptist covenant theology. And his corpus of literature contributes a large portion to our knowledge of Particular Baptist thought. But the areas in which Keach's covenantal thought is worthy of special notice are relatively small, and they center around a point that is more semantic than substantial. His covenant theology can be summarized and evaluated under three headings, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, the old covenant and the covenant of grace, and the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace. As Keach's federal theology is surveyed, his relationship to the Baptist tradition will become clear.

The Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace

The covenants of works and grace run throughout Benjamin Keach's writings and play a very important and foundational role in the distinctives of his covenant theology. One must glean Keach's comments in *Tropologia* for his early references on these points, but the content of what Keach said with brevity in the early 1680s is consistent with his broader expositions of the same topics a decade later.[147]

Keach (and Thomas Delaune) stated that Jesus Christ was appointed the Mediator of salvation to mankind "upon consideration of [man's] Impotency or Inability to perform the Conditions of the first Covenant since the Fall, and to bear the Punishment for the Breach of it."[148] This first covenant was made with "Adam (and so all Mankind, considered as being in his Loins)."[149] And it was a covenant based on obedience to "the Law of the First Covenant, which was broke by our first Parents, by the breach of which all the World became guilty before God."[150]

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[146] The quantity of Benjamin Keach's writings has been over-correlated to significance. Yet even the quantity of his work stems largely from the time in which he wrote. Keach's writings in which covenant theology plays an important or central role explode from 1689 onward, and they are often simply sermons edited for publication.

[147] *Tropologia* was not a systematic exposition of any particular theological subject, but rather a collation and explanation of biblical metaphors and linguistic conventions. Dispersed throughout areas of the book explaining the Bible's description of man as a sinner or Christ as a Redeemer or Mediator, there are clear statements about the covenants of works and grace.

[148] Delaune and Keach, *Tropologia*, II:92. In this chapter, I am quoting from the 1682 edition of *Tropologia* which was divided into four books. Elsewhere, they referred to the first covenant simply by the name of the law. "What a miserable Condition Mankind had involv'd themselves in by reason of Sin…for the Breach of the Law." Delaune and Keach, *Tropologia*, II:95.

[149] Delaune and Keach, *Tropologia*, IV:101.

[150] Keach, *The Marrow of True Justification; Or, Justification without Works* (London: Dorman Newman, 1692), 4.

In standard Reformed fashion, Keach contrasted the covenant of works with the covenant of grace. "The *First Covenant* was made with the *First Adam*, for himself and his Posterity, as the common Head of all mankind, and so also there was a Covenant made with the *Second Adam* for himself, and all those chosen in him, or all his Seed."[151] The results of these two covenants and their respective heads was nothing less than condemnation in Adam and salvation in Jesus Christ. "As *Adam* being a common Person or Head of all his Seed, and we in him fell under Sin, Death and Condemnation, by vertue of the Covenant of Works made with him; even so in Jesus Christ all the Elect partake of Grace and Justification unto life by that one Covenant of Grace made with him."[152]

For Keach, the foundation of these two covenants was the distinction between the law and the gospel. "The difference betwixt the Law and the Gospel (as all our true Protestant Divines teach)" is "that the one requires doing, *Do this and live*; but the other, no doing but believing for Life and Salvation: their Terms differ not only in degree, but in their whole Nature."[153] As argued throughout this work, this mutually exclusive binary of the law and the gospel, which developed into the covenants of works and grace, profoundly affected one's overall covenantal system. It was the same for Keach.

In particular, Keach saw the rest of the Biblical covenants as being expressions of one of these two covenants. "We read of *Two Covenants*, an *Old*, and a *New*, a *First*, and a *Second*, a *Covenant of Works*, *and a Covenant of Grace*."[154] Keach said, "Both these covenants had several Revelations, Ministrations, or Editions."[155] Keach used this paradigm to argue that the old covenant was a republication of the covenant of works, in subservience to the covenant of grace. He also used this paradigm to argue for the presence of the covenant of grace throughout the Old Testament.[156] And Keach used this paradigm to deny the

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[151] Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant, A Sweet Cordial for a drooping Soul: Or, The Excellent Nature of the Covenant of Grace Opened: In a Sermon Preached January the 29th. At the Funeral of Mr. Henry Forty* (London: H. Barnard, 1693), 4. Henry Forty (1625-25 January, 1693) was a Particular Baptist pastor and successor of Henry Jessey. When Forty died, his members joined Keach's church. See LMA DW/PA/05/1693/030, Will of Henry Forty, Proved 31 January, 1693.

[152] Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant*, 9. Cf. also Keach, *A Golden Mine Opened: Or, The Glory of God's Rich Grace Displayed in the Mediator to Believers: And His Direful Wrath against Impenitent Sinners. Containing the Substance of near Forty Sermons Upon several Subjects* (London: William Marshall, 1694), 202. "*Adam* had no Surety that undertook for him in the first Covenant, as a Covenanting Hand, which he soon by his Sin lost, and undid himself and all his Posterity, whom he was set up as the common Head and Representative of."

[153] Keach, *The Marrow of True Justification*, 22.

[154] Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant*, 4.

[155] Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant*, 7. Cf. Petto, *The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant*, vi-vii. Owen said in his preface to Petto's work that the biblical covenants were "emanations from and particular expressions or limitations of one or other of the two solemn Covenants."

[156] Cf. Keach, *The Ax laid to the Root II*, 18. "Although there is (and ever was) but one Covenant of Grace, yet…there were several distinct Additions of it, altho' we say, the Promise or Gospel Covenant, was one and the same, in all Ages, in respect of the Things promised." What Keach meant by this was that the gospel

distinction between the covenant of grace and the covenant of redemption.[157] There are two substantially opposite covenants, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

This contrast between the covenants of works and grace also played into Keach's explanation of the conditions of the covenant of grace, or the lack thereof. Keach argued that because Christ performed all the obedience necessary to merit the blessings of his people in the covenant of grace, there was no action to be performed by the creature as a condition upon which covenantal blessings would be dispensed. Keach affirmed that "God requires Faith and Repentance of them that shall be saved."[158] But he explained that repentance and faith are not "procuring or Fœderal Conditions of the Covenant blessings, or of Salvation, because all the Graces of the Spirit are contained in the Covenant as part of it."[159] Rather, they are "Conditions of Connexion by way of order and dependence of things upon another."[160]

The covenants of works and grace were standard features in Particular Baptist covenant theology prior to, and along with Benjamin Keach. In 1681, Nehemiah Coxe provided the most robust description of the covenant of works, but it had already been confessed by the Particular Baptists in 2LCF, and it was a common feature and assumption of other Particular Baptist covenantal writings. Keach did not lead the Particular Baptists to accept this doctrine.[161] He helped to perpetuate and maintain the doctrine.

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was made known through many types and shadows in the Old Testament, some clearer than others. He listed ways that the gospel was revealed to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets under a variety of promises. And in the New Testament, the gospel was plainly and directly made known.

[157] More on this below.

[158] Keach, *The Display of Glorious Grace*, 186.

[159] Keach, *The Display of Glorious Grace*, 187. Behind Keach's insistence on this terminology was his rejection of Richard Baxter's covenant of grace that included easier and milder conditions than the covenant of works. If Keach's articulation of these doctrines was accepted, it necessarily precluded any model like Baxter's in which procuring conditions were legitimized in the covenant of grace. Cf. Richard Baxter, *Aphorisms of Justification with their Explanation Annexed* (London: n.p., 1649), 48, 57-58. Baxter argued that God gave man "a new Law" or "new Covenant…the Conditions whereof should be more easy to the Sinner and yet more abasing." On this, see Hicks, "Richard Baxter and Benjamin Keach," 158-167.

[160] Keach, *The Display of Glorious Grace*, 185. Elsewhere, Keach said "Faith is God's Gift, and not the Condition of the Covenant of Grace; it is a Branch, or part of that Grace promised therein, upon the Condition of Christ's Satisfaction, not the Condition to be performed by the Creature, which procures the Blessings purchased." Keach, *A Golden Mine Opened*, 94.

[161] In Keach, *The Display of Glorious Grace*, 14-15, Keach says that "some may doubt whether this was a Covenant of Works, because here is only a threatning of Death upon his Disobedience to this one positive Law." But this objection, and its answer, is simply copied from Samuel Petto. So if there were doubt about this doctrine, it was not doubt peculiar to the Particular Baptists. Cf. Petto, *The Difference Between the Old and New Covenant*, 9.

The Old Covenant and the Covenant of Grace

Benjamin Keach's polemic against infant baptism began as early as 1664 with *The Child's Instructor; Or, A New and Easy Primmer*. Keach was fined, imprisoned, and pilloried for this publication, and all of its copies were destroyed.[162] It was not until Keach doubled in age that he published his first work of significance on the subject of infant baptism, *Gold Refin'd; Or, Baptism in its Primitive Purity*. Keach stated in its preface, dated 6 August, 1688, that it might be a surprise to some that he was writing "to revive the Controversie, of which little has been written of late Years"[163] Nehemiah Coxe had written in 1681, and Philip Cary's interaction with Richard Burthogge was published in 1684. But apart from those works, the Particular Baptists' side of the debate was silent, and Keach was ready to revive it.[164]

Keach was aware that he was walking down a well-trodden path. With reference to the argument for infant baptism from the Abrahamic covenant, Keach said "*tho something is here said in Answer…enough hath been said by others formerly*."[165] Keach was most likely referring to John Tombes, Henry Danvers, and Nehemiah Coxe, all of whom he quoted in support of his covenantal arguments.[166] Given Keach's self-conscious reliance on his predecessors, he dedicated the majority of his attention on the meaning of baptism and the necessity of treating it as a positive law to be obeyed in accordance with New Testament commands and examples. Among many chapters in his first major work on baptism, Keach dedicated only one to examining the argument for infant baptism from the Abrahamic covenant. In subsequent books, Keach spent more time on the covenantal dimension of the baptismal debate. Throughout Keach's polemical works on baptism, he was simply refreshing and defending the arguments used by those who had gone before him.[167]

Keach articulately defended the Particular Baptist position. Following Coxe, and many before him, Keach appealed to Paul's intra-canonical exegesis, comparing Genesis 12:3 and Galatians 3:8. He argued that the Scriptures themselves interpreted God's

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[162] On this story, see Arnold, *Benjamin Keach*, 56-57. Keach later rewrote the primer from memory and it passed through many editions, including a foreword with Hanserd Knollys' commendation.

[163] Keach, *Gold Refin'd*, i of an unpaginated preface.

[164] Philip Cary had already written *A Solemn Call* at this time, but it was not published until 1690. Keach's preface told the reader to anticipate Cary's book, though not naming him.

[165] Keach, *Gold Refin'd*, v of an unpaginated preface.

[166] Cf. Keach, *Gold Refin'd*, 100. After 1690, Keach regularly referred his readers to Philip Cary's book, as well.

[167] Cf. Keach, *Gold Refin'd*, 100. "It hath been proved, that the Covenant of Grace made with Abraham and his Seed, doth not intend his Carnal Seed according to the Flesh; but his Spiritual Seed, or such who had the Faith of Abraham."

dealings with Abraham in such a way that two seeds, one earthly and the other heavenly, received distinct promises, earthly and heavenly. Keach argued that the Abrahamic covenant offered earthly blessings, and since the new covenant was established on "better promises," Keach concluded that "He must be blind that can't discern from hence, that there were Two Covenants made with *Abraham*."[168]

Circumcision was a key point in Keach's polemic. "The Covenant of Circumcision could not be the Gospel Covenant, because the Terms of it runs according to the *Sinai* Covenant."[169] The Abrahamic covenant required obedience in order to maintain enjoyment of earthly blessings. Citing Romans 2:25, Keach argued "That Circumcision appertained to the Law, to the Old Covenant, or Covenant of Works…No Profit, no Advantage by Circumcision, unless the Circumcised keep the Law."[170] Keach used circumcision to connect the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant. They were both new repetitions or editions of the covenant of works. "The Covenant of Circumcision was part of that legal, old, and external Covenant, which is done away."[171]

Keach also faced the common argument that the Abrahamic covenant must be the covenant of grace because in it God promised to be God to Abraham's natural offspring. Like many others, Keach countered that "He was not the God of [Abraham's] Seed as such, according to the Nature of the Covenant of Grace."[172] To be God to a covenant people, is simply to be in covenant with them. It was necessary that the promises of the covenant be examined. "God may be said to be the God of a People, in a Covenant way, Two manner of ways. I*st*. *By the Free Promise,* or Covenant of Grace in a spiritual Gospel

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[168] Keach, *The Ax laid to the Root: Or, One Blow more at the Foundation of Infant Baptism and Church-Membership. Part I* (London: John Harris, 1693), 17. Cf. Keach, *The Rector Rectified and Corrected; Or, Infant-Baptism Unlawful: Being A Sober Answer to a late Pamphlet, entituled, An argumentative and practical Discourse of Infant-Baptism; Published by Mr. William Burkit, Rector of Mildin in Suffolk* (London: John Harris, 1692), 42. The Abrahamic covenant, Keach argued, "is not a pure Gospel-Covenant, but a mix'd Covenant, partly made with his Natural or Fleshly Seed, and partly made with him and his Spiritual Seed." Cf. also Keach, *Pedo-Baptism disproved; Being an Answer To two printed Papers (put forth by some Gentlemen called the Athenian Society, Who pretend to answer all Questions sent to them of what Nature soever) Called the Athenian Mercury* (London: John Harris, 1691), 14. "Whether there was not a twofold Covenant made with Abraham, one with his Fleshly Seed, and the other with his Spiritual Seed, signified by the Bond-Woman and the Free-Woman, and their Sons Ishmael and Isaac?"

[169] Keach, *The Ax laid to the Root I*, 21.

[170] Keach, *The Ax laid to the Root I*, 12.

[171] Keach, *The Ax laid to the Root I*, 18. Cf. Keach, *The Rector Rectified*, 51-52. "That Covenant that was a part or branch of the old Covenant, or Covenant of Works, was not a Covenant of Grace, or Gospel-Covenant. But the Covenant of Circumcision was a part or branch of the old Covenant, or Covenant of Works. Ergo, The Covenant of Circumcision was not a Covenant of Grace, or Gospel-Covenant."

[172] Keach, *The Ax laid to the Root II*, 6.

Sense…or, 2*d*. God may be said to be the God of a People, by *entering into an external, legal Covenant with them*."[173]

Keach appealed to Galatians 4 to support his sorting of the earthly and heavenly offsprings of Abraham into two substantially distinct covenants. And he used the same passage to point to the abrogation of the earthly temporary covenant. "There were two Covenants made with *Abraham*…one with his natural Seed as such; the other with his spiritual Seed as such…The casting out of the *Bond-woman* shews the Abrogation of the *first Covenant*, and all the external fœderal and fleshly Rights."[174] This meant that "The Covenant of Peculiarity God made with him and his natural seed as such, as to the Date of the Duration thereof, was now *run out* and expired."[175]

Keach believed that all covenants were editions of the covenant of works or the covenant of grace. The covenant of circumcision was an edition of the covenant of works, as was the Mosaic covenant that expanded God's dealings with Abraham. Circumcision, therefore, was anticipatory of the Mosaic covenant, where God expanded his dealings with the natural offspring of Abraham. It was a gateway obligation to a larger yoke of laws delivered at Sinai.[176]

Though Keach equated the Mosaic covenant with the original covenant of works, he also qualified that it was not a coordinate rival to the covenant of grace, but a subordinate handmaid. Keach said,

> The Covenant of Works was *primarily* made with the First *Adam*, and all mankind in him…True, there was another Edition or Administration of it given to *Israel*, which tho' it was a Covenant of Works, *i.e. Do this and live*, yet it was not given by the Lord to the same End and Design, as the Covenant was given to our *First Parents*, *viz*. It was not given to justifie them, or to give eternal Life.[177]

Keach argued that the Mosaic covenant was not intended to give life because "'tis evident, the Promises made to them, upon their Obedience, were Earthly and Temporal

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[173] Ibid.

[174] Keach, *The Ax laid to the Root I*, 14.

[175] Keach, *A Golden Mine Opened*, 12. As for Hercules Collins, so also for Keach the language of the "covenant of peculiarity" likely indicates the influence of Nehemiah Coxe.

[176] Keach, *The Ax laid to the Root I*, 13. "That Ministration of [the covenant of works], of which the Apostle speaks, and calls the *First Covenant*, was that which God gave to *Abraham's Seed*, *according to the Flesh*, by *Moses*. And to assure *Abraham*, that unto his Seed should be given that Law, or the *Oracles of God*, &c. he gave him the Covenant or Precept of Circumcision." Keach added that circumcision "served as a Pledge of the Law, and obliged them to keep it."

[177] Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant*, 7.

Promises, and not Spiritual."[178] The Mosaic covenant was an expansion of the earthly Abrahamic covenant, thus it promised life, but all that could be enjoyed through it was a blessed life in Canaan. This meant that the Mosaic covenant subserved the covenant of grace. Keach asked, "Is the Law, as given in *Mount Sinai* against the Covenant of Grace? No, but given in Suberviency thereunto; or as leading to it by discovering the Evil of Sin, and the absolute Necessity of Christ's perfect Obedience thereunto in our stead."[179]

Keach used these arguments to defend Philip Cary from John Flavel. Keach also questioned Flavel's version of Reformed covenant theology. Flavel had made a bold argument that Reformed divines did not teach that the Mosaic covenant was a covenant of works. Keach disagreed. He said, "Now, that the *Sinai Covenant* was a Covenant of Works, (as considered in it self) notwithstanding the end and design of God therein, (I find many of our sound *Protestant Divines* do affirm) tho' given with a merciful and gracious intention, or in subserviency to the Gospel."[180]

For Keach, if the old external legal covenant made with Abraham's offspring was not the covenant of grace, but differed from it in substance, the validity of infant baptism fell. Even so, Keach argued against infant baptism from the nature of the covenant of grace as a testament. He said, "A Testament is the Sentence and Declaration of our Just Will, of what we would have done after Death…the New Testament, or Law of the Gospel, is ratified and confirmed by the Death of Christ."[181] Thus, obedience to baptism could only correspond to commands from Christ in the New Testament. He then expressed the old Puritan Particular Baptist mindset, "From hence you may see what reason we have to examine what is preached for Doctrine, or published by any Man as the Mind of Christ; for if it be not written or found in his last Will and Testament, we ought to utterly reject it."[182] The old covenant from which infant baptism was justified had been abrogated, and the commands of Christ in the new covenant required discipleship before the administration of baptism.

Keach's antipaedobaptist polemics were a strong defense of the Particular Baptists' beliefs in the 1690s. But Keach was not a pioneer in these arguments. He carried the flag forward as one who stood on the shoulders of others.[183]

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[178] Keach, *The Ax laid to the Root II*, 15.

[179] Keach, *The Display of Glorious Grace*, 181.

[180] Keach, *The Ax laid to the Root II*, 15. One page earlier, Keach said to Flavel that there was no need for debate about the covenant of works itself, but simply the relationship of the covenant of works to the Mosaic covenant. "Our controversie, lies not so much about, the Covenant of Works, as given to *Adam*, but about the nature of the *Sinai* Covenant, since Circumcision appears to be of the same Nature with that."

[181] Delaune and Keach, *Tropologia*, II:119.

[182] Delaune and Keach, *Tropologia*, II:123.

[183] Keach's major works on the covenants were written between 1691-1698. This makes his words in 1699 worthy of repetition, that among those who had written on the two covenants, "the Reverend Mr.

The Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Grace

Keach's greatest distinctive in covenant theology was his rejection of the covenant of redemption. This was a change of opinion for Keach. He said,

> I have formerly been inclined to believe the Covenant, or Holy Compact between the Father and the Son, was distinct from the Covenant of Grace; but upon farther search…I cannot see that they are Two distinct Covenants, but both one and the same glorious Covenant of Grace, only consisting of Two Parts.[184]

Exactly when this change took place is unknown. *Tropologia* does not espouse the doctrine of the covenant of redemption in places where one might expect it to, which means that Keach may have made up his mind as early as the beginning of the 1680s.[185]

Keach was aware that his position was different from many other theologians whom he respected. He said, "In some things thou wilt find that I do differ from many Learned Men, who make the Covenant of Redemption, a distinct Covenant from that of Peace and Reconciliation."[186] It is likely that Keach had both Baptists and paedobaptists in mind in this statement. The Baptists' second confession clearly taught the covenant of redemption by name, and Nehemiah Coxe, Philip Cary, and Hercules Collins were plain proponents of it. John Owen was another defender of the covenant of redemption, whom Keach quoted more than any other author, by far. Yet when all is examined, the difference between Keach and his other-minded friends was more semantic than substantial.

The covenant of grace and covenant of redemption could not be distinct covenants because, according to Keach, the Bible limits the number of covenants to two. "Where do we read in all the Holy Scripture of Three Covenants…Evident it is to all, that the Holy Ghost only holds forth, or speaks but of Two Covenants, a Covenant of Works, and a Covenant of Grace…although both these Covenants had several Revelations,

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Nehemiah Cox in my Judgment hath exceeded; yet his Stile seems a little too high for ordinary Capacities." Robert Prudom, *Truth Unvail'd*, iv.

[184] Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant*, 6.

[185] Cf. Delaune and Keach, *Tropologia*, II:239. "God the Father, in pursuit of the Soveraign Purpose of his Will, hath granted unto the Son, as Incarnate, and Mediatour of the New Covenant, according to the eternal Counsel between them both, a Sovereign Right or Heirship, the Possession of an absolute Proprietor to dispose of all things at his pleasure." Cf. 2LCF 8.1 that spoke of Christ's calling to the office of Mediator "According to the Covenant made between them both." Cf. also Delaune and Keach, *Tropologia*, III:9. Citing Zechariah 6:13, they said that the gospel is glorious because "It is brought in as the result of that great and glorious Council which was held in Eternity."

[186] Keach, *The Display of Glorious Grace*, iv.

Ministrations, or Editions."[187] The covenant of redemption was a numerical intrusion into this biblical paradigm.

Despite this conflation, Keach maintained that the covenant of grace was a covenant of works for Christ. "I do not say it was a Covenant of Grace to him, for he obtains all by Desert and Merit; yet seeing God entered into that Covenant with him, for us, as our Head, Surety and Representative, and not for himself singly, considered, it cannot be anything else but the Covenant of Grace."[188] Keach was concerned with maintaining the freeness and absoluteness of the covenant of grace. "[Christ], in the Covenant of Grace or Gospel-Covenant, merited all for us, so that we might have all freely given to us through the Redemption of his Blood."[189] What Christ won for his people is freely given to them.

Keach wanted to avoid the distinction between the covenants of redemption and grace in order to avoid the "new Notion of a conditional Covenant of Faith, and sincere Obedience."[190] If the two covenants were distinct, one could argue that in the covenant of redemption Christ died to make an easier covenant of obedience available for mankind, the covenant of grace. Keach was clear that "Christ in this Covenant did not work out a piece of it, and leave us to work out the rest."[191]

Keach emphasized the symmetry of the covenants of works and grace to argue his point. What Adam did was applied to his offspring at their natural birth. What Christ did was applied to his offspring at their supernatural rebirth. If there were not two covenants for Adam, there were not two covenants for Christ. Keach even appealed to the Westminster Larger Catechism to prove his point. "With whom was the Covenant of Grace made? The Covenant of Grace was made with Christ, the second Adam; and in him, with all the Elect."[192]

His argument can be summed up in the following quotation,

> Pray let me here note Four Things, as touching the Covenant of Grace.
> 1. *The Time when 'twas made with Christ for us: and that was from eternity*.

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[187] Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant*, 7.

[188] Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant*, 6. Keach was clear that the covenant of grace was a works-arrangement for Christ. Cf. Delaune and Keach, *Tropologia*, II:132. "Tho there is no Merit or Desert for the Works which Believers do, being unprofitable Servants when they have done all; yet there is very great Merit and Worth in what Christ did. And the Father will give him his Wages."

[189] Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant*, 12-13.

[190] Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant*, 15.

[191] Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant*, 35.

[192] Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant*, 32. Delaune had appealed to this question as well, but not to distinguish the covenant of redemption from the covenant of grace. Delaune was simply restricting the membership of the covenant of grace to the elect.

> 2. *When it was first revealed*; and that was to our First Parents as soon as they fell, and broke the Covenant of Works.
> 3. When it was executed, confirmed, and touching the outward Dispensation of it, took its rise or beginning; it was executed by Christ as our Head, when he came into the World, in part. i.e. in his Life, and ratified and confirmed by his Blood: and the rise of beginning of the outward Dispensation of it, was at his Death and Resurrection, when the Old Covenant ceas'd or was abrogated.
> 4. *When and how are we said to have it made with us, or performed to us actually and personally, so as to have real Interest in all the Blessings and Privileges thereof?* (For as it respecteth us, it only contains free and absolute Promises, like the Waters of Noah: And not a Law of conditional Faith and Obedience to be performed by us) Now we have not actual Interest in it, and so personally it cannot be said to be made with us, until we have actual Union with Christ, and do believe in him.[193]

Many Particular Baptist distinctives are wrapped up in these four points. The covenant of grace is connected to the revelation of the gospel, and thus made known and appropriated by the elect in all ages. At the same time, Keach affirmed that this covenant did not have its own outward dispensation until Christ established the covenant as a testament in his blood. Keach also avoided justification from eternity by clarifying that the covenant is not made with us until we have union with Christ.

Keach employed this doctrine pastorally, in many sermons. He said,

> This Covenant stands firm, this Foundation of God is sure, it was Established from all Eternity by an Eternal Act of God, that cannot be Repealed, Altered or Changed: God is thine, Christ is thine, if thou hast Union with him, all is thine; and the Oath of God, the Truth and Faithfulness of God is engaged for the making good all the Blessings that are contained in this Covenant; God is thine, and Christ is thine for ever.[194]

Keach preached the doctrine of the covenant of grace, identical to the covenant of redemption, to comfort those grieving the death of a believer, to encourage his congregants of their perseverance and assurance, as well as to evangelize unbelievers.

When Keach's covenant of grace is compared to the Particular Baptists, or others such as John Owen, who espoused the covenant of redemption as distinct from the covenant of grace, the differences are nominal. Keach was clear that Christ was called to a work of redemption for an elect people, that he completely fulfilled the work given to him, and that the people for whom he took up the office of Mediator do not fail to receive the

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[193] Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant,* 17.

[194] Keach, *The Everlasting Covenant*, 43.

benefits that he won for them. These elect people receive the benefits by faith as a condition of "connexion" in order of sequence, but not merit. Whether one sorts these pieces into one or two covenants makes little difference when so much is agreed upon. Though Keach laid claim to exegesis in his choice to combine these covenants, it is clear that neo-baxterianism was Keach's great concern and a driving force in how Keach expressed himself on this point.

Perhaps the greatest evidence that Keach's views are not substantially different from his peers is the fact that his views did not provoke a debate among them.[195] Keach wrote on this subject during the hymn-singing controversy when suspicions and accusations abounded among brethren.[196] Whatever Keach's companions thought of his views, Keach considered them distinct enough to merit a rewriting of the Baptists' confession of faith for his own church. Keach's covenant theology was clearly represented in this confession.[197]

Benjamin Keach was an important figure in Baptist covenant theology. But he did not push the Particular Baptists to accept federalism, nor did he bring a fledgling movement to its fullness. Keach defended the Particular Baptists' soteriological foundation in the covenants of works and grace. He defended their distinctives in his polemics against infant baptism. And he diversified their tradition in the covenant of grace and the covenant of redemption.

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[195] Other Particular Baptists made their views known, but not by way of debate or interaction with one another. It was not a point of contention. Cf. Prudom, *Truth Unvail'd*, 38-47. Robert Prudom taught that the covenant of grace and the covenant of redemption were "one and the same covenant." Thomas Edwards advocated for the covenant of redemption as distinct from the covenant of grace in Edwards, *The Paraselene dismantled*, 68-69. Nathaniel Wyles, pastor of a church in Shadwell, seems to have advocated for the covenant of redemption as distinct from the covenant of grace. Cf. Nathaniel Wyles, *Comfort for Believers, Or, A Discourse of the Duty and Priviledge of being Sealed by the Holy Spirit* (London: James Gibbs, 1696), 43. "God the Father, and Christ the Son, struck hands together about the Redemption of Sinners."

[196] When Isaac Marlow (d.1719) announced that he planned to publish a book on the Trinity, other Baptists expressed their distrust of his handling of the subject. Cf. S.W., J.C., J.L., *Truth Vindicated; Or Mr. Keach's Sober Appeal* (London: n.p., 1691), 24. "We must tell him many Eyes are upon him about his Book of the Trinity: not looking upon him a fit Person to meddle with such sacred and deep Mysteries; but we find him conceitedly confident of his Parts and Abilities." J.C. is John Christophers. Murdina MacDonald suggests that J.L. is John Leader, a member of Keach's church. See Murdina MacDonald, "London Calvinistic Baptists 1689-1727: Tensions Within a Dissenting Community Under Toleration" (PhD Dissertation, Regent's Park College, Oxford, 1982), 57.

[197] Cf. Keach, *The Articles of the Faith of the Church of Christ, or Congregation meeting at Horsley-down, Benjamin Keach, Pastor, As asserted this 10th of the 6th Month, 1697* (London: n.p., 1697). Article IX, "God…from all Eternity, did enter into a Covenant of Grace." Article XXXI, "the Covenant of Grace was primarily made with the second Adam, and in him with all the Elect, who as God-man, or Mediator, was set up from everlasting as a Common Person, or as their Head and Representative." A congregation under John Webbar in Gosport near Portsmouth used the same confession.

Conclusion

The Particular Baptists of the 1680s and 1690s lived in a difficult time. The first decade of this period was unstable and chaotic for political reasons. The final years of Charles II's reign, Monmouth's rebellion, the repeal campaign of James II, and the Glorious Revolution of William III and Mary had a dampening effect on Particular Baptist publication. From 1689 onward, the Particular Baptists enjoyed previously unexperienced social and political freedoms, but they faced other challenges, especially the hymn-singing controversy.

The Particular Baptists also faced the challenge of time. By the close of the seventeenth century, many of the first-generation Particular Baptists were dead, and the remainder were dying. The second-generation Particular Baptists were left with a fractured association in London, but they, too, were afflicted by an exodus of mortality. When Benjamin Keach died in 1704, all of the Particular Baptist authors covered in these chapters, and many other Particular Baptist pastors, had preceded him in death. Their pulpits were not left empty, but they certainly left a dearth of leadership that needed filling.

Philip Cary, Hercules Collins, and Benjamin Keach helped to take up the Baptist heritage given to them by others and to leave that same heritage for the Baptists that would follow them. Their covenant theology was that of their fathers. They taught the doctrine of the covenant of works, some in more detail than others. They connected the Israelite covenants to that covenant of works, with varying nuances. And they differed on the legitimacy of the covenant of redemption. But whatever the diversity of their views in those areas, Cary, Collins, and Keach sorted the seeds of Abraham into distinct covenants and thus countered the argument for infant baptism.

Cary, Collins, and Keach built on the work of Nehemiah Coxe. Cary relied on Henry Danvers and Edward Hutchinson, among other authors. Collins and Keach built on the work of Philip Cary. By the end of the seventeenth century, a substantial body of Particular Baptist covenantal literature, creating a Baptist tradition from which authors drew regularly.

In continuity with previous Particular Baptists, Cary, Collins, and Keach saw their covenant theology not simply as an inheritance of the Baptist tradition of covenant theology, but also as a consistent outworking and presentation of the Protestant Reformed tradition of covenant theology. John Owen featured prominently in the writings of all three as their argument for legitimacy within the tradition.

Cary's debate with Flavel illustrates that paedobaptists disagreed with the idea that Particular Baptist covenant theology could be the natural outworking of Reformed principles. Flavel saw no place for the Particular Baptists' views in Reformed literature and theology. However, as demonstrated in this chapter and throughout this work, Flavel's view of the tradition was incomplete and skewed. Specifically, Flavel's critique

of Cary necessarily included a critique of John Owen whom Cary had appropriated and quoted.

Cary's engagement with Obadiah Sedgwick, Anthony Burgess, and Francis Roberts further illustrates that in Cary's view paedobaptists were unwilling to admit the internal contradictions that existed among their own authors. Francis Roberts contradicted John Ball and advocated a covenantal model similar to George Walker whose covenant theology had been criticized by Robert Baillie. Cary, like other Baptists, regarded his views as a consistent selection from within the views of the diversity of the Reformed tradition.

Conclusion: Particular Baptist Covenant Theology and the Reformed Tradition

This dissertation has addressed the question, what was the federal theology of the Particular Baptists, and how did it compare to and contrast with the prevailing views of paedobaptist writers in the Reformed tradition? Several sub-questions have facilitated providing an answer, examining the unity and diversity of the Reformed tradition to locate the Particular Baptists within the same. Specifically, in what ways did the Reformed tradition relate the covenants of works and grace to the old and new covenants, and how does the diversity of the tradition on this point clarify connections to Particular Baptist covenant theology? To what extent did hermeneutics play a role in the diversity of Reformed covenant theology, especially regarding typology, and what light does this diversity shed on the relation of Particular Baptist covenant theology to the Reformed tradition? What were the historical and theological backgrounds of the Particular Baptists? How did the covenant theology of the Particular Baptists develop throughout the seventeenth century? To what extent was there unity and diversity in the covenant theology of the Particular Baptists themselves?

Chapter one located the unity of the Reformed covenantal tradition in the distinction between the law and the gospel, an inviolable separation between righteousness obtained by works or through faith. The doctrines of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace were built on this foundation. Subsequent chapters demonstrated that the Particular Baptists shared this common heritage with the Reformed community, confessing it in the first and second London confessions of faith and repeatedly teaching it in their covenant theology.

The covenant of works with Adam does not feature prominently in seventeenth-century Particular Baptists' writings, in general, but it is present throughout them both as an assumption and as a specifically identified covenant.[1] Among the authors covered

[1] In addition to the Particular Baptists presented to this point that espoused the covenant of works, see also Edward Drapes, *Gospel-Glory Proclaimed Before the Sonnes of Men, In the Visible and Invisible Worship of God* (London: Francis Tyton, 1649), 54. "This Covenant of Works to *Adam, If thou doest this, thou shalt dye*, was written in great Letters (as I may so say) to Israel." Cf. Richardson, *Divine Consolations*, 224-225. "If man had been to performe any of the conditions of this Covenant, it had not been a covenant of grace, but a covenant of works…If this covenant had depended on our keeping the conditions, we could not be certain of our salvation because we might not performe the conditions; at least greatly doubt whether wee had performed them or no; for if Adam in his greatest strength fell, how shall we in our weaknesse stand?" Cf. Vavasor Powell, *Christ and Moses Excellency, Or Sion and Sinai's Glory* (London: R.I., 1650), 2. "Q. But was not that, the Covenant of works, which God made with Adam in Paradise before his fall? A. I deny not, but that it was of the nature of a Covenant." Powell argued that there was only a command, and not a promise given to Adam. And though Adam would have lived forever had he obeyed, God did not reveal a promise of life to Adam because God's intention was ultimately to save Adam by grace, not works. Cf. Purnell, *A*

in this dissertation, Christopher Blackwood, Edward Hutchinson, Nehemiah Coxe, Philip Cary, Hercules Collins, and Benjamin Keach taught the covenant of works clearly. The

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Little Cabinet Richly Stored, 24-25. "*Adam* was all mankind, as all mankind was in *Adam*, in the loyns of *Adam*; so Christ is the Covenant, and all the Covenant is as it were in the loins of Christ…*Adam* lost his righteousness, the foundation of the first Covenant." Cf. Thomas Collier, *A Discourse of the True Gospel Blessedness in the New Covenant, Or The distinction of the two Covenants, New and Old, First and Second* (London: H. Hills, 1659), 11. "The first or old covenant was first promulgated after the creation to *Adam* in Paradice before his fall, *In the day thou eatest thou shalt die*…And although the old covenant in Scripture is taken from *Mount Sinai*, yet here is the beginning of the work." This was one of Collier's "orthodox" phases. Cf. Hardcastle, *Expositions of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism*, 27-28. "*Q:* What speciall Act of Providence doth God excercise towards Man, in the state wherein hee was Created? *A* When God had Created Man, hee entred into a Covenant of life with him upon condition of perfect obedience, forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of Good and evill, upon paine of death." Cf. John Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded* (London: M. Wright, 1659), 8-9, 17. "That which was given to *Adam* in Paradise, you will grant was the Covenant of Works; for it runs thus. *Do this and live*; do it not, and die." Cf. Kiffin, *A Sober Discourse*, iv of an unpaginated preface. "Knowledge of the Truth, and Obedience to it in outward performances, will as little save mans soul as the Covenant of Works." Cf. Joseph Wright, *Folly Detected Or, Some Animadversions on a Book called, A Brief Discourse Concerning Singing in the Publick Worship of God* (London: John Harris, 1691), 82. Thomas Whinnell (1658-1720) said in an appendix contained in Wright's work, "*Adam* stood not as a private, but as a publick Person: all were to stand and fall in him, he being the Root and Representative of Mankind. *Adam* therefore being made our Head in that first Covenant, by Divine Ordination, therefore his Transgression is accounted ours." Cf. Elias Keach, *A Plain and Familiar Discourse on Justification* (London: John Harris, 1694), 2. "All Men are concerned with *Adam*, as considered in his Loyns, and his Apostasie from God. He was a publick person, and did personate Mankind that should proceed from him." Cf. Isaac Marlow, *A Tract on the Sabbath-Day. Wherein the keeping of the First-day of the Week a Sabbath is justified* (London: J. A., 1694), 6. "There was a blessed relief and Salvation provided therein for the Elect that betook themselves unto it, and made use of it against the Curse and Threatnings annexed to the first Covenant, broken in and by our first Parents." Cf. Anon. *Truth Vindicated in Several Branches* (London: n.p., 1695), 274. [The Abrahamic Covenant] differs from the Covenant of Works in respect of the Persons covenanting: That was made with Adam, this with Abraham…Adam was a Representative in that Covenant; while he stood we stood, when he fell we fell." Cf. Nathaniel Wyles, *The Substance of Several Sermons, From John, ix. 39.* (London: n.p., 1698), 26. "Perfect obedience was the condition of the *Covenant of Works*; and yet merit not once Named nor Allowed; Because *Adams* strength to work by…was indeed from the Bounty and Goodness of the Creator; yet as in a way of Condecency." Cf. Thomas Edwards, *The Paraselene dismantled of her Cloud. Or, Baxterianism Barefac'd* (London: William Marshall, 1699), 13, 69, 77, 79, 85. "The Covenant of Works was made with all Men in Adam, who was made and stood as a publick Person, Head and Root in a common and comprehensive Capacity." Cf. Prudom, *Truth Unvail'd*, 13-26. "The great Creator enter'd into Covenant with [Adam] upon the terms of Obey and live." Cf. Thomas Harrison, *A Funeral Sermon On Mordecai Abbot Esq* (London: D. Brown, 1700), 15-16. "According to the Tenor of the Covenant of Works, the [Service] was to be first accepted, and then the Person on that account; yet according to the Tenor of the Covenant of Grace, the Person must be first accepted, and then the Service." Cf. Harrison, *A Funeral Sermon Occasioned by the Decease of Mrs. Elizabeth Ewer, Late Wife of Mr. Samuel Ewer, Minister of the Gospel. Preach'd at Hempstead in Hartfordshire, October the 7th, 1701* (London: A. Bell, 1702), 25. "A Promise of Life was included in the Covenant of Works; but the Condition of that Covenant being broken by Adam, the Publick Head of Mankind, that Promise gives us no ground to hope for it: While under that Covenant, we are liable to the threatned Punishment."

Second London Baptist Confession also taught the covenant of works in full detail and name. If there were opposition to the doctrine or the term, it does not appear in the Particular Baptists' literature in the seventeenth century.

The Particular Baptists taught a covenant of grace that tendered salvation freely to those who believe in Jesus Christ. The benefits of salvation won by Christ the Mediator (for some, in the covenant of redemption) were invisibly and infallibly granted to the elect. Because those united to Christ were the elect, and because God alone could grant the condition, faith, and because God only granted faith to the elect, the Particular Baptists used this foundation not only to teach an orthodox Reformed soteriology, but also to point out the inconsistency of automatically including infants in the membership of the covenant of grace. All mankind was dead in Adam in the covenant of works until freed by Christ in the covenant of grace. The covenant of grace was the covenant of salvation for Christ's people, a people only identifiable by profession of faith.

Chapters one and five also located Reformed covenant theology's diversity in the relation of the law and the gospel to the covenants of salvation history. For some Reformed theologians, the Mosaic covenant was the original covenant of works delivered again to Israel. For others, the Mosaic covenant contained the law from the original covenant of works, but it was not itself a covenant of works. It was the covenant of grace legally dispensed, or in the form of a covenant of works, or obscurely revealed. For others, the Mosaic covenant contained the law from the original covenant of works, but it was not the covenant of works nor was it the covenant of grace. It was an earthly covenant of obedience for Abraham's natural offspring in Canaan, pointing to salvation in Christ through typology.

The Particular Baptists, sharing the unity and root of Reformed covenant theology, reflected and grew within its diversity. Chapters two through seven have demonstrated that the Particular Baptists' covenant theology aligned most closely with John Cameron and John Owen, who relegated the Mosaic covenant to an earthly sphere typical of and subservient to the heavenly covenant of grace. The Particular Baptists' distinctive feature was that they applied the same hermeneutical principles to the Abrahamic covenant that Cameron and Owen had applied to the Mosaic covenant, calling it a covenant of works. Between Abraham and Moses they saw the same covenantal arrangement—the same parties (God and Abraham's natural offspring), the same promises (blessed life in Canaan and the birth of the Messiah), and the same precepts (obedience to the moral law and all positive laws).

Integral to the Particular Baptists' covenant theology was their view of typology. Types revealed antitypes, but were distinct in substance from them. The earthly national covenants of works made known the heavenly transnational covenant of grace. The uniting factor between the two was Jesus Christ. But their disunity centered on Christ, as well. The earthly covenants connected Abraham's natural offspring to Jesus Christ through birth from below. The heavenly covenant connected those who followed

Abraham's faith to Jesus Christ through birth from above. In this way, typology and history were united. The earthly people of Abraham and the model of their covenant were abrogated and removed. The Particular Baptists saw the paedobaptist model as failing to sort the seeds of Abraham into distinct covenants with distinct, but typologically related, blessings. In John Owen's theology, they saw the most consistent inconsistency of any paedobaptist theologian.

For the Particular Baptists, their view of the Abrahamic covenant as an earthly covenant of works was a realignment that resolved tensions and inconsistencies within Reformed covenant theology. And they repeatedly appealed to Reformed authors such as Owen to make their points. The covenant theology that the Particular Baptists had learned from the Reformed tradition did not need to be rebuilt, but refined.

This dissertation has also given due attention to the Particular Baptists' origins which trace back to the Separatist Puritan movement within the universities and parish churches of England. This movement was pushed to action by the Laudian Arminian agenda. Many students, professors, and priests sought to resist and remove unscriptural traditions from the church. The Particular Baptists were among those university students and parish priests who separated from the Church of England in pursuit of a theology and ecclesiology that began and ended with the faith and practice of the Scriptures.

The Baptists examined their own baptisms as infants, as well as the baptisms that they had administered to their parishioners. They found it to be an unscriptural, indeed anti-scriptural, imposition. From their beginnings, there were two complementary branches of argumentation used by the Particular Baptists to advocate their position. The first was an argument from positive law. The Particular Baptists' Protestant, Reformed, and Puritan commitment to worshipping God according to his revealed commands meant that the commands of a covenant were to be administered according to positive institution, and in the case of the new covenant according to apostolic example as well. Consequences could not contradict commands or examples. Consequently, the Baptists only baptized professing believers whose conduct matched their profession.

The second complementary branch of argumentation was the identity and nature of the covenant of grace. The Abrahamic covenant was not the covenant of grace, though the covenant of grace was made known to Abraham. Andrew Ritor, John Spilsbury, Christopher Blackwood, and William Kiffen, Hanserd Knollys, and Benjamin Coxe established this argument in the early 1640s. For the rest of the seventeenth century it was expanded by the Particular Baptists with considerable continuity and minimal diversity.

The most thorough defender of the Particular Baptists' covenantal distinctive, the distinction between the covenant of circumcision and the covenant of grace, was Nehemiah Coxe, though Thomas Patient is not far behind. Prominent Baptists followed

this paradigm in the eighteenth century, especially Isaac Backus (9 January, 1724–20 November, 1806) and Abraham Booth (20 May, 1734–27 January, 1806).[2]

In addition to identifying the covenant of grace separately from the Abrahamic covenant, the Particular Baptists often appealed to the nature of Christ's federal headship in the covenant of grace. There was no valid claim to the covenant without a claim to Christ. Infants of believers could not lay an inherent claim to union with Christ, nor did they demonstrate any evidence of the condition of the covenant, faith. Apart from union with the federal head, and devoid of the condition of the covenant, the meaning of infants being in covenant raised more questions than it answered.

In light of the diversity of the Reformed covenantal tradition, it is noteworthy that there is a marked lack of diversity in the Baptist tradition. John Spilsbury's early equation of the Abrahamic covenant and the covenant of grace was somewhat different in presentation than most Baptists after him, but his underlying hermeneutics and arguments were identical to other Baptists and he signed his name to works that clearly distinguished the Abrahamic covenant from the covenant of grace. Thomas Patient taught that God had established an outward ceremonial covenant beginning after the fall, of which the covenant of circumcision was a subsequent development, though this seems to have had no significant impact on his own covenant theology or the Baptists' tradition. Thomas Hardcastle represents the greatest example of diversity within the Particular Baptist tradition by specifically identifying the old covenant with the covenant of grace in substance, but his views were taught privately and not published. Benjamin Keach diversified the Baptist tradition in his rejection of the covenant of redemption, but as argued in chapter seven there was no substantial rejection of shared Baptist theology in Keach's model. Rather, Keach was reacting, or overreacting, to Richard Baxter.

Though the majority of the Particular Baptists' writings on covenant theology served a polemical purpose, their covenant theology was much more than an antipaedobaptist polemic. Polemical covenant theology may occupy a large proportion of their covenantal literature, but it would be a mistake to equate this polemical disproportion with their

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[2] Isaac Backus, *A Short Description Of the difference between the Bond-woman and the Free; As they are the two Covenants, with the Character and Conditions of each of their Children* (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1770, 2nd edition), 23-26, 69. "We readily grant that the covenant of grace was made known to [Abraham], and that he was saved by faith, as saints are now; but the covenant of circumcision, as it contained the constitution and limits of the *Jewish* church, we cannot look upon to be the same that believers are in now." Cf. also Abraham Booth, *An Essay on the Kingdom of Christ* (Norwich: John Sterry, 1801), 18-22. "The Gospel Covenant is called new, and is expressly opposed to the Sinai Confederation, from which it is extremely different. It is also pronounced a better Covenant than that which Jehovah made with ancient Israel." Its subjects are "the spiritual seed of Abraham, gathered out of all nations." Booth, *Pædobaptism examined, on the principles, concessions, and reasonings, of the most learned Pædobaptists* (London: E. Fawcett, 1784), 333-345. In this section, Booth addressed the argument from Genesis 17 and appealed to John Tombes. He also quoted John Owen's first commentary on Hebrews where he distinguished the twofold seed of Abraham, the passage used by Hutchinson, Delaune, and others.

covenant theology as a whole. Christopher Blackwood's catechism and Nehemiah Coxe's exposition of the covenant of works and the Noahic covenant are excellent examples of this. Additionally, many uses of covenant within Particular Baptist literature are found within comforting words in funeral sermons or pastoral discussions of assurance and perseverance. The polemics of the Particular Baptists did not seek to uproot the Reformed family tree and replace it with something completely different, but to prove the scriptural legitimacy of their distinctives within its branches. Where the Reformed tradition was united in covenant theology, the Particular Baptists joined their unity. Where the Reformed tradition was diverse, the Particular Baptists lived within that diversity.

Whether it was an appeal to Reformation principles of religious worship, an appeal to Reformed soteriology, or an appeal to the Cameron-Owen typological interpretation of God's dealings with Israel, in the Particular Baptists' opinion Reformed theology's own principles legitimized and necessitated their conclusions. The covenant of circumcision was not the covenant of grace. The old covenant was not the new covenant. The shadow was not the substance, and "The Substance being come, the shadow flies away."[3] So long as the old and new covenants remained mixed, the church and its covenant theology would not be truly and fully reformed.[4]

[3] Collins, *The Sandy Foundation*, 8.

[4] The authors covered in this dissertation represent the major publishing figures in seventeenth-century Particular Baptist history and literature. It would be helpful to investigate the covenant theology of individuals at the fringes of the Particular Baptists' circles. Cf. Henry Jessey, *Miscellanea Sacra: Or Diverse necessary Truths* (London: T.M., 1665), *A Storehovse of Provision, to further Resolution in severall Cases of Conscience, And Questions now in Dispute* (London: Charles Sumptner, 1650); Powell, *Christ and Moses Excellency*; Bunyan, *The Doctrine of the Law and Grace Unfolded*. Additionally, the covenant theology of Particular Baptists who abandoned their beliefs (mostly for Quakerism) are not covered in detail in this work. Cf. Kilcop, *Ancient and Durable Gospel*; Hobson, *The Fallacy of Infants Baptisme Discovered*; Fisher, *Babybaptism Meer Babism*; Richardson, *Divine Consolations;* Richardson, *Justification By Christ Alone*, Richardson, *The Saints Desire*, Richardson, *Some brief Considerations;* Collier, *A Discourse of the True Gospel Blessedness*.

Appendix 1a

Samuel Bolton's translation of Cameron	John Ball's uncited quotation of Cameron
Covenant in Scripture, doth sometimes signifie the absolute promise of God, without any restipulation; as was that Covenant which God made with Noah…of this kinde is that Covenant, in which God promiseth to give unto his elect faith and perseverance: to which promise there cannot be conceived any condition to be annexed, which is not comprehended in the promise it self.	The Covenant in Scripture doth sometimes signifie an absolute Promise of God, without any stipulation at all, such as was the Covenant which God made with Noah…Of this kind is the Covenant wherein God promiseth that he will give his elect faith and perseverance, to which promise no condition annexed can be conceived in mind, which is not comprehended in the Promise it selfe.
But it often falls out that the name of Covenant is so used in holy Scriptures, as it is evident thereby is signified the free promise of God; yet with the restipulation of our duty, which otherwise…might both be required of God, and also…ought to be performed of the creature.	But oftentimes in holy Writ the name Covenant is so used that in it is plainly signified a free Promise of God, but without stipulation of duty…which otherwise…might have been exacted of God, and ought to have been performed of the creature.
This distinction of the Covenant, doth depend upon the distinction of the love of God, and for there is love of God to the creature; from whence every thing that is good in the creature hath wholly flowed…not for any thing from it selfe, but from God, as it was loved with that first love of God; that love, for better understanding, we call Gods primary or antecedent; this, Gods secondary or consequent love: from that we say, doth depend both the paction and fulfilling of the absolute Covenant, from this depends the fulfilling of that Covenant, to which is annexed a restipulation.	This distinction of the Covenant depends upon a distinction of Gods love; for there is a love of God towards the creature, whence all the good that is in the creature doth flow…not of it selfe, but of God, as it was beloved with that first love. That we may call primary or antecedent (for distinction sake) this secondary or consequent love. From that flows both the making and fulfilling of the Absolute Covenant: on this depends the fulfilling of the Covenant, whereunto a restipulation is annexed.
For in the absolute Covenant, there is nothing in the creature that doth impel God either to promise, or to performe what he hath promised; But in that	For in the Absolute Covenant there is nothing in the creature that might move God, either to promise, or to performe what he hath promised: but in the

Covenant to which a restipulation is annexed, God doth fulfill what he hath promised, because the creature hath rendered what is required; and Although God hath made such a Covenant, wherein he hath promised so great things, upon condition of mans performance, yet all this proceeds from the antecedent love of God.[1]	Covenant to which a stipulation is annexed, God fulfils what he promised, because the creature exhibits what was exacted, although this that God hath entered into such a Covenant, and promised so great things unto him that performed such and such obedience, that wholly proceeds from the antecedent love, and free pleasure of Almighty God.[2]

[1] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant*, 353-355.

[2] Ball, *A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*, 3-4.

Appendix 1b

Samuel Bolton's translation of Cameron	John Ball's uncited quotation of Cameron
The covenant of grace either is considered as being promised, or as being openly and fully promulged and confirmed; it was promised to the Father; first, to Adam; then to the Patriarchs, and afterwards to the people of Israel; but it was openly and fully promulged, Now when the fulnesse of time was come, Gal. 4.4.[1]	The Covenant of Grace is either promised or promulgated and established. Promised to the Father, first to Adam, and afterwards to the Patriarchs, and lastly to the people of Israel…Promulgated, after the fulnesse of time came. (Gal. 4.4. in the margin).[2]

[1] Cameron, *Three-fold Covenant of God*, 365.

[2] Ball, *Covenant of Grace*, 27.

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